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ROBERT BROWNING'S

POETICAL WORKS

v.15

DRAMATIC IDYLS

JOCOSERIA

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1889

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DRAMATIC IDYLS.

FIRST SERIES.

DRAMATIC IDYLS.

FIRST SERIES.

1879.

MARTIN RELPH.

My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster long ago,
On a bright May day, a strange old man, with a beard as white as snow,
Stand on the hill outside our town like a monument of woe,
And, striking his bare bald head the while, sob out the reason—so!

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never forgive myself:
But—God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,

As coward, coward I call him—him, yes, him! Away
from me!
Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used
to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all
eyes, no tongue?
People have urged "You visit a scare too hard on a lad
so young!
You were taken aback, poor boy," they urge, "no time to
regain your wits:
Besides it had maybe cost you life." Ay, there is the
cap which fits!

So, cap me, the coward,—thus! No fear! A cuff on
the brow does good:
The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the
brain for food.
See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I
trust, dear friends,
The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I
have made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the hill-top, here
stand I,

Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason why,
When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool, friends, since the bite
Of a worm inside is worse to bear: pray God I have baulked him quite!

I 'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It came of the way they cooped
Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because tight-hooped
By the red-coats round us villagers all: they meant we should see the sight
And take the example,—see, not speak, for speech was the Captain's right.

"You clowns on the slope, beware!" cried he: "This woman about to die
Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the spy.
Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them perhaps will learn
That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King the King's concern.

"Here's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between
King George and his foes:
What call has a man of your kind—much less, a woman
—to interpose?
Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not
foes—so much the worse!
The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed
with the few perverse.

"Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it you plainly a
month ago,
And where was the good? The rebels have learned just
all that they need to know.
Not a month since in we quietly marched: a week, and
they had the news,
From a list complete of our rank and file to a note of
our caps and shoes.

"All about all we did and all we were doing and like to
do!
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture who wrote it,
too.
Some of you men look black enough, but the milk-white
face demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 't is a woman who
writes, be sure!

"Is it 'Dearie, how much I miss your mouth!'—good natural stuff, she pens?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of course: with talk about cocks and hens,
How 'robin has built on the apple-tree, and our creeper which came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining afresh round casement in famous leaf.'

"But all for a blind! She soon glides frank into 'Horrid the place is grown
With Officers here and Privates there, no nook we may call our own:
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house, and lodging will be to seek
For the second Company sure to come ('t is whispered) on Monday week.'

"And so to the end of the chapter! There! The murder, you see, was out:
Easy to guess how the change of mind in the rebels was brought about!
Safe in the trap would they now lie snug, had treachery made no sign:
But treachery meets a just reward, no matter if fools malign!

"That traitors had played us false, was proved– sent
news which fell so pat:
And the murder was out—this letter of love, the sender
of this sent that!
'T is an ugly job, though, all the same—a hateful, to have
to deal
With a case of the kind, when a woman 's in fault: we
soldiers need nerves of steel!

"So, I gave her a chance, despatched post-haste a mes-
sage to Vincent Parkes
Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was, since one of
the King's own clerks,
Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the town close by
where the rebels camp:
A sort of a lawyer, just the man to betray our sort—the
scamp!

"'If her writing is simple and honest and only the lover-
like stuff it looks,
And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor down in the rebels'
books,
Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove you are each
of you clear of crime,
Or martial law must take its course: this day next week 's
the time!'

"Next week is now: does he come? Not he! Clean
gone, our clerk, in a trice!
He has left his sweetheart here in the lurch: no need of
a warning twice!
His own neck free, but his partner's fast in the noose
still, here she stands
To pay for her fault. 'T is an ugly job: but soldiers
obey commands.

"And hearken wherefore I make a speech! Should any
acquaintance share
The folly that led to the fault that is now to be punished,
let fools beware!
Look black, if you please, but keep hands white: and,
above all else, keep wives—
Or sweethearts or what they may be—from ink! Not a
word now, on your lives!"

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white to the Cap-
tain's face—the brute
With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose and the
bloodshot eyes to suit!
He was muddled with wine, they say: more like, he was
out of his wits with fear;
He had but a handful of men, that 's true,—a riot might
cost him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page, with pinioned arms and face
Bandaged about, on the turf marked out for the party's firing-place.
I hope she was wholly with God : I hope 't was His angel stretched a hand
To steady her so, like the shape of stone you see in our church-aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the bandage to vex her eyes,
No face within which she missed without, no questions and no replies—
"Why did you leave me to die?"—"Because . . ." Oh, fiends, too soon you grin
At merely a moment of hell, like that—such heaven as hell ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up went the guns in a line.
Those heaped on the hill were blind as dumb,—for, of all eyes, only mine
Looked over the heads of the foremost rank. Some fell on their knees in prayer,
Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes, with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last, had sidled
behind the group:
I am highest of all on the hill-top, there stand fixed
while the others stoop!
From head to foot in a serpent's twine am I tightened:
I touch ground?
No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which the fetters
rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst—aught else but
see, see, only see?
And see I do—for there comes in sight—a man, it sure
must be!—
Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls, rises, at random
flings his weight
On and on, anyhow onward—a man that's mad he
arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white high-flourished
above his head?
Why does not he call, cry,—curse the fool!—why throw
up his arms instead?
O take this fist in your own face, fool! Why does not
yourself shout "Stay!
Here's a man comes rushing, might and main, with
something he's mad to say"?

And a minute, only a moment, to have hell-fire boil up
in your brain,
And ere you can judge things right, choose heaven,—
time 's over, repentance vain!
They level: a volley, a smoke and the clearing of smoke:
I see no more
Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic arms, nor the
something white he bore.

But stretched on the field, some half-mile off, is an
object. Surely dumb,
Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody heard, not one
of us saw him come!
Has he fainted through fright? One may well believe!
What is it he holds so fast?
Turn him over, examine the face! Heyday! What,
Vincent Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the self-same shot: one bullet
has ended both,
Her in the body and him in the soul. They laugh at
our plighted troth.
"Till death us do part?" Till death us do join past
parting—that sounds like
Betrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what need has my
fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed: one bound,
and your soul reached hers!
There is clenched in your hand the thing, signed, sealed,
the paper which plain avers
She is innocent, innocent, plain as print, with the King's
Arms broad engraved:
No one can hear, but if anyone high on the hill can see,
she 's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with heart-break—
plain it grew
How the week's delay had been brought about: each
guess at the end proved true.
It was hard to get at the folk in power: such waste of
time! and then
Such pleading and praying, with, all the while, his lamb
in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon out, no end
to the stupid forms—
The licence and leave: I make no doubt—what wonder
if passion warms
The pulse in a man if you play with his heart?—he was
something hasty in speech;
Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he had to
beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in his grasp,—
what followed but fresh delays?
For the floods were out, he was forced to take such a
roundabout of ways!
And 't was "Halt there!" at every turn of the road, since
he had to cross the thick
Of the red-coats: what did they care for him and his
"Quick, for God's sake, quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long? till the first
knave smirked "You brag
Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend to a King's
friend here your nag!"
Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece they
plundered him still,
With their "Wait you must,—no help: if aught can help
you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was—I forget the name—whose
Mayor must have the bench
Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for "Vincent,"
thinks he, sounds French!
It well may have driven him daft, God knows! all man
can certainly know
Is—rushing and falling and rising, at last he arrived in a
horror—so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have rescued both! Ay
bite me! The worm begins
At his work once more. Had cowardice proved—that
only—my sin of sins!
Friends, look you here! Suppose . . . suppose . . .
But mad I am, needs must be!
Judas the Damned would never have dared such a sin
as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself, my wretched
self, and dreamed
In the heart of me "She were better dead than happy
and his!"—while gleamed
A light from hell as I spied the pair in a perfectest
embrace,
He the saviour and she the saved,—bliss born of the very
murder-place!

No! Say I was scared, friends! Call me fool and
coward, but nothing worse!
Jeer at the fool and gibe at the coward! 'T was ever
the coward's curse
That fear breeds fancies in such: such take their shadow
for substance still,
—A fiend at their back. I liked poor Parkes,—loved
Vincent, if you will!

And her—why, I said "Good morrow" to her, "Good even," and nothing more:

The neighbourly way! She was just to me as fifty had been before.

So, coward it is and coward shall be! There 's a friend, now! Thanks! A drink

Of water I wanted: and now I can walk, get home by myself, I think.

PHEIDIPPIDES.

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honour to all!
Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in praise
—Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and spear!
Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and forever,—O latest to whom I upraise
Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and flock!
Present to help, potent to save, Pan—patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!
See. 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks!

Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and you,
"Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your command I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs through,
Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights did I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for "Persia has come!
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria—but Athens, shall Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die—the flower of Hellas utterly die,
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the stander-by?
Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er destruction's brink?
How,—when? No care for my limbs!—there 's lightning in all and some—
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens—Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
Malice,—each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I stood
Quivering,—the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from dry wood:
"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them 'Ye must'!"

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last!
"Has Persia come,—does Athens ask aid,—may Sparta befriend?
Nowise precipitate judgment—too weighty the issue at stake!
Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the Gods!
Ponder that precept of old, 'No warfare, whatever the odds
In your favour, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to take

Full-circle her state in the sky!' Already she rounds to
it fast:
Athens must wait, patient as we—who judgment suspend."

Athens,—except for that sparkle,—thy name, I had
mouldered to ash!
That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away
was I back,
—Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false
and the vile!
Yet "O Gods of my land!" I cried, as each hillock and
plain,
Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them
again,
"Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honours we paid
you erewhile?
Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too
rash
Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

"Oak and olive and bay,—I bid you cease to enwreathe
Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's
foot,
You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn
a slave!

Rather I hail thee, Parnes,—trust to thy wild waste
tract!
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if
slacked
My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave
No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can
breathe,
Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the
mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a
bar
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure
across:
"Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the
fosse?
Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No
bridge
Better!"—when—ha! what was it I came on, of wonders
that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan!
Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned
his hoof:

All the great God was good in the eyes grave-kindly—
the curl
Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.
"Halt, Pheidippides!"—halt I did, my brain of a whirl:
"Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious
began:
"How is it,—Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!
Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more help-
ful of old?
Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!
Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have
faith
In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The
Goat-God saith:
When Persia—so much as strews not the soil—is cast in
the sea,
Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most
and least,
Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the
free and the bold!'

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the
pledge!'"

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
—Fennel—I grasped it a-tremble with dew—whatever it bode)
"While, as for thee . . . " But enough! He was gone. If I ran hitherto—
Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
Parnes to Athens—earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's edge!
Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of Greece,
Whose limbs did duty indeed,—what gift is promised thyself?
Tell it us straightway,—Athens the mother demands of her son!"
Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at length
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of his strength
Into the utterance—"Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou hast done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee release
From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!'

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind!
Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may grow,—
Pound—Pan helping us—Persia to dust, and, under the deep,
Whelm her away for ever; and then,—no Athens to save,—
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave,—
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall creep
Close to my knees,—recount how the God was awful yet kind,
Promised their sire reward to the full—rewarding him —so!"

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:
So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Akropolis!
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!

'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung down his shield,
Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the Fennel-field
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine through clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
Is still "Rejoice!"—his word which brought rejoicing indeed.
So is Pheidippides happy for ever,—the noble strong man
Who could race like a God, bear the face of a God, whom a God loved so well;
He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell
Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute:
"Athens is saved!"—Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed.

HALBERT AND HOB.

HERE is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts whelped, for den,
In a wild part of North England, there lived once two wild men
Inhabiting one homestead, neither a hovel nor hut,
Time out of mind their birthright: father and son, these – but—
Such a son, such a father! Most wildness by degrees
Softens away: yet, last of their line, the wildest and worst were these.

Criminals, then? Why, no: they did not murder and rob;
But, give them a word, they returned a blow—old Halbert as young Hob:
Harsh and fierce of word, rough and savage of deed,
Hated or feared the more—who knows?—the genuine wild-beast breed.

Thus were they found by the few sparse folk of the
country-side;
But how fared each with other? E'en beasts couch, hide
by hide,
In a growling, grudged agreement: so, father and son
aye curled
The closelier up in their den because the last of their
kind in the world.

Still, beast irks beast on occasion. One Christmas night
of snow,
Came father and son to words—such words! more cruel
because the blow
To crown each word was wanting, while taunt matched
gibe, and curse
Competed with oath in wager, like pastime in hell,—nay,
worse:
For pastime turned to earnest, as up there sprang at
last
The son at the throat of the father, seized him and held
him fast.

"Out of this house you go!"—(there followed a hideous
oath)—
"This oven where now we bake, too hot to hold us
both!

If there 's snow outside, there 's coolness: out with you, bide a spell
In the drift and save the sexton the charge of a parish shell!"

Now, the old trunk was tough, was solid as stump of oak
Untouched at the core by a thousand years: much less had its seventy broke
One whipcord nerve in the muscly mass from neck to shoulder-blade
Of the mountainous man, whereon his child's rash hand like a feather weighed.

Nevertheless at once did the mammoth shut his eyes,
Drop chin to breast, drop hands to sides, stand stiffened —arms and thighs
All of a piece—struck mute, much as a sentry stands,
Patient to take the enemy's fire: his captain so commands.

Whereat the son's wrath flew to fury at such sheer scorn
Of his puny strength by the giant eld thus acting the babe new-born:

And "Neither will this turn serve!" yelled he. "Out with you! Trundle, log!
If you cannot tramp and trudge like a man, try all-fours like a dog!"

Still the old man stood mute. So, logwise,—down to floor
Pulled from his fireside place, dragged on from hearth to door,—
Was he pushed, a very log, staircase along, until
A certain turn in the steps was reached, a yard from the house-door-sill.

Then the father opened eyes—each spark of their rage extinct,—
Temples, late black, dead-blanched,—right-hand with left-hand linked,—
He faced his son submissive; when slow the accents came,
They were strangely mild though his son's rash hand on his neck lay all the same.

"Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did I drag—so—
My father down thus far: but, softening here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you wait for an outer word.

"For your own sake, not mine, soften you too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I nor blame
Nor praise you. I stopped here: and, Hob, do you the same!"

Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the father's throat.
They mounted, side by side, to the room again: no note
Took either of each, no sign made each to either: last
As first, in absolute silence, their Christmas-night they passed.

At dawn, the father sate on, dead, in the self-same place,
With an outburst blackening still the old bad fighting-face:
But the son crouched all a-tremble like any lamb new-yeaned.

When he went to the burial, someone's staff he borrowed —tottered and leaned.
But his lips were loose, not locked,—kept muttering, mumbling. "There!

At his cursing and swearing!" the youngsters cried: but
the elders thought "In prayer."
A boy threw stones: he picked them up and stored them
in his vest.

So tottered, muttered, mumbled he, till he died, perhaps
found rest.
"Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts?" O
Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn them soft, seems
clear!

IVÀN IVÀNOVITCH.

"THEY tell me, your carpenters," quoth I to my friend the Kuss,
"Make a simple hatchet serve as a tool-box serves with us.
Arm but each man with his axe, 't is a hammer and saw and plane
And chisel, and—what know I else? We should imitate in vain
The mastery wherewithal, by a flourish of just the adze,
He cleaves, clamps, dovetails in,—no need of our nails and brads,—
The manageable pine: 't is said he could shave himself
With the axe,—so all adroit, now a giant and now an elf,
Does he work and play at once!"
Quoth my friend the Russ to me,
"Ay, that and more beside on occasion! It scarce may be
You never heard tell a tale told children, time out of mind,

By father and mother and nurse, for a moral that 's
behind,
Which children quickly seize. If the incident happened
at all,
We place it in Peter's time when hearts were great not
small,
Germanized, Frenchified. I wager 't is old to you
As the story of Adam and Eve, and possibly quite as
true."

In the deep of our land, 't is said, a village from out the
woods
Emerged on the great main-road 'twixt two great soli-
tudes.
Through forestry right and left, black verst and verst of
pine,
From village to village runs the road's long wide bare
line.
Clearance and clearance break the else-unconquered
growth
Of pine and all that breeds and broods there, leaving
loth
Man's inch of masterdom,—spot of life, spirt of fire,—
To star the dark and dread, lest right and rule expire

Throughout the monstrous wild, a-hungered to resume
Its ancient sway, suck back the world into its womb :
Defrauded by man's craft which clove from North to South
This highway broad and straight e'en from the Neva's mouth
To Moscow's gates of gold. So, spot of life and spirt
Of fire aforesaid, burn, each village death-begirt
By wall and wall of pine—unprobed undreamed abyss.

Early one winter morn, in such a village as this,
Snow-whitened everywhere except the middle road
Ice-roughed by track of sledge, there worked by his abode
Ivàn Ivànovitch, the carpenter, employed
On a huge shipmast trunk ; his axe now trimmed and toyed
With branch and twig, and now some chop athwart the bole
Changed bole to billets, bared at once the sap and soul.
About him, watched the work his neighbours sheepskin-clad ;
Each bearded mouth puffed steam, each grey eye twinkled glad
To see the sturdy arm which, never stopping play,
Proved strong man's blood still boils, freeze winter as he may.

Sudden, a burst of bells. Out of the road, on edge
Of the hamlet—horse's hoofs galloping. "How, a sledge?
What 's here?" cried all as—in, up to the open space,
Workyard and market-ground, folk's common meeting-place,—
Stumbled on, till he fell, in one last bound for life,
A horse: and, at his heels, a sledge held—"Dmìtri's wife!
Back without Dmìtri too! and children—where are they?
Only a frozen corpse!"

They drew it forth: then—"Nay,
Not dead, though like to die! Gone hence a month ago:
Home again, this rough jaunt—alone through night and snow—
What can the cause be? Hark—Droug, old horse, how he groans:
His day 's done! Chafe away, keep chafing, for she moans:
She 's coming to! Give here: see, motherkin, your friends!
Cheer up, all safe at home! Warm inside makes amends
For outside cold,—sup quick! Don't look as we were bears!
What is it startles you? What strange adventure stares

Up at us in your face? You know friends—which is
which ?
I 'm Vàssili, he 's Sergeì, Ivàn Ivànovitch . . ."

At the word, the woman's eyes, slow-wandering till they
neared
The blue eyes o'er the bush of honey-coloured beard,
Took in full light and sense and—torn to rags, some
dream
Which hid the naked truth—O loud and long the scream
She gave, as if all power of voice within her throat
Poured itself wild away to waste in one dread note!
Then followed gasps and sobs, and then the steady flow
Of kindly tears: the brain was saved, a man might know.
Down fell her face upon the good friend's propping
knee;
His broad hands smoothed her head, as fain to brush it
free
From fancies, swarms that stung like bees unhived. He
soothed—
"Loukèria, Loùscha!"—still he, fondling, smoothed and
smoothed.
At last her lips formed speech.

"Ivàn, dear—you indeed!
You, just the same dear you! While I . . . O intercede,

Sweet Mother, with thy Son Almighty—let his might
Bring yesterday once more, undo all done last night!
But this time yesterday, Ivàn, I sat like you,
A child on either knee, and, dearer than the two,
A babe inside my arms, close to my heart—that 's lost.
In morsels o'er the snow! Father, Son, Holy Ghost,
Cannot you bring again my blessed yesterday?"

When no more tears would flow, she told her tale: this way.

"Maybe, a month ago,—was it not?—news came here,
They wanted, deeper down, good workmen fit to rear
A church and roof it in. 'We 'll go,' my husband said:
'None understands like me to melt and mould their lead.'
So, friends here helped us off—Ivàn, dear, you the first!
How gay we jingled forth, all five—(my heart will burst)—
While Dmìtri shook the reins, urged Droug upon his track!

"Well, soon the month ran out, we just were coming back,
When yesterday—behold, the village was on fire!
Fire ran from house to house. What help, as, nigh and nigher,

The flames came furious? 'Haste,' cried Dmìtri, 'men must do
The little good man may: to sledge and in with you,
You and our three! We check the fire by laying flat
Each building in its path,—I needs must stay for that,—
But you . . . no time for talk! Wrap round you every rug,
Cover the couple close,—you 'll have the babe to hug.
No care to guide old Droug, he knows his way, by guess,
Once start him on the road: but chirrup, none the less!
The snow lies glib as glass and hard as steel, and soon
You 'll have rise, fine and full, a marvel of a moon.
Hold straight up, all the same, this lighted twist of pitch!
Once home and with our friend Ivàn Ivànovitch,
All 's safe: I have my pay in pouch, all 's right with me,
So I but find as safe you and our precious three!
Off, Droug!'—because the flames had reached us, and the men
Shouted 'But lend a hand, Dmìtri—as good as ten!'

"So, in we bundled—I, and those God gave me once;
Old Droug, that 's stiff at first, seemed youthful for the nonce:
He understood the case, galloping straight ahead.
Out came the moon: my twist soon dwindled, feebly red

In that unnatural day—yes, daylight, bred between
Moon-light and snow-light, lamped those grotto-depths which screen
Such devils from God's eye. Ah, pines, how straight you grow
Nor bend one pitying branch, true breed of brutal snow!
Some undergrowth had served to keep the devils blind
While we escaped outside their border!

"Was that—wind?
Anyhow, Droug starts, stops, back go his ears, he snuffs,
Snorts,—never such a snort! then plunges, knows the sough 's
Only the wind: yet, no—our breath goes up too straight!
Still the low sound,—less low, loud, louder, at a rate
There 's no mistaking more! Shall I lean out—look—learn
The truth whatever it be? Pad, pad! At last, I turn—

"'T is the regular pad of the wolves in pursuit of the life in the sledge!
An army they are: close-packed they press like the thrust of a wedge:
They increase as they hunt: for I see, through the pine-trunks ranged each side,

Slip forth new fiend and fiend, make wider and still more wide
The four-footed steady advance. The foremost—none may pass :
They are elders and lead the line, eye and eye—green-glowing brass !
But a long way distant still. Droug, save us ! He does his best :
Yet they gain on us, gain, till they reach,—one reaches . . . How utter the rest ?
O that Satan-faced first of the band ! How he lolls out the length of his tongue,
How he laughs and lets gleam his white teeth ! He is on me, his paws pry among
The wraps and the rugs ! O my pair, my twin-pigeons, lie still and seem dead !
Stepàn, he shall never have you for a meal,—here 's your mother instead !
No, he will not be counselled—must cry, poor Stiòpka, so foolish ! though first
Of my boy-brood, he was not the best : nay, neighbours have called him the worst :
He was puny, an undersized slip,—a darling to me, all the same !
But little there was to be praised in the boy, and a plenty to blame.

I loved him with heart and soul, yes—but, deal him a
blow for a fault,
He would sulk for whole days. 'Foolish boy! lie still
or the villain will vault,
Will snatch you from over my head!' No use! he cries,
screams,—who can hold
Fast a boy in a frenzy of fear! It follows—as I foretold!
The Satan-face snatched and snapped: I tugged, I tore
—and then
His brother too needs must shriek! If one must go, 't is
men
The Tsar needs, so we hear, not ailing boys! Perhaps
My hands relaxed their grasp, got tangled in the
wraps:
God, he was gone! I looked: there tumbled the cursed
crew,
Each fighting for a share: too busy to pursue!
That 's so far gain at least: Droug, gallop another verst
Or two, or three—God sends we beat them, arrive the
first!
A mother who boasts two boys was ever accounted rich:
Some have not a boy: some have, but lose him,—God
knows which
Is worse: how pitiful to see your weakling pine
And pale and pass away! Strong brats, this pair of
mine!

"O misery! for while I settle to what near seems
Content, I am 'ware again of the tramp, and again there gleams—
Point and point—the line, eyes, levelled green brassy fire!
So soon is resumed your chase? Will nothing appease, nought tire
The furies? And yet I think—I am certain the race is slack,
And the numbers are nothing like. Not a quarter of the pack!
Feasters and those full-fed are staying behind . . . Ah why?
We 'll sorrow for that too soon! Now,—gallop, reach home, and die,
Nor ever again leave house, to trust our life in the trap
For life—we call a sledge! Teriòscha, in my lap!
Yes, I 'll lie down upon you, tight-tie you with the strings
Here—of my heart! No fear, this time, your mother flings . .
Flings? I flung? Never! But think!—a woman, after all
Contending with a wolf! Save you I must and shall,
Terentiì!
"How now? What, you still head the race,

Your eyes and tongue and teeth crave fresh food, Satan-face?
There and there! Plain I struck green fire out! Flash again?
All a poor fist can do to damage eyes proves vain!
My fist—why not crunch that? He is wanton for . . .
O God,
Why give this wolf his taste? Common wolves scrape and prod
The earth till out they scratch some corpse—mere putrid flesh!
Why must this glutton leave the faded, choose the fresh?
Terentiì—God, feel!—his neck keeps fast thy bag
Of holy things, saints' bones, this Satan-face will drag
Forth, and devour along with him, our Pope declared
The relics were to save from danger!

"Spurned, not spared!
'T was through my arms, crossed arms, he—nuzzling now with snout,
Now ripping, tooth and claw—plucked, pulled Terentiì out,
A prize indeed! I saw—how could I else but see?—
My precious one—I bit to hold back—pulled from me!

Up came the others, fell to dancing—did the imps!—
Skipped as they scampered round. There 's one is grey,
and limps:
Who knows but old bad Màrpha,—she always owed me
spite
And envied me my births,—skulks out of doors at night
And turns into a wolf, and joins the sisterhood,
And laps the youthful life, then slinks from out the wood,
Squats down at door by dawn, spins there demure as erst
—No strength, old crone,—not she!—to crawl forth half
a verst!

"Well, I escaped with one: 'twixt one and none there
lies
The space 'twixt heaven and hell. And see, a rose-light
dyes
The endmost snow: 't is dawn, 't is day, 't is safe at home!
We have outwitted you! Ay, monsters, snarl and foam,
Fight each the other fiend, disputing for a share,—
Forgetful, in your greed, our finest off we bear,
Tough Droug and I,—my babe, my boy that shall be
man,
My man that shall be more, do all a hunter can
To trace and follow and find and catch and crucify
Wolves, wolfkins, all your crew! A thousand deaths
shall die

The whimperingest cub that ever squeezed the teat!
'Take that!' we'll stab you with,—'the tenderness we
met
When, wretches, you danced round—not this, thank God
—not this!
Hellhounds, we baulk you!'

"But—Ah, God above!—Bliss, bliss—
Not the band, no! And yet—yes, for Droug knows
him! One—
This only of them all has said 'She saves a son!
His fellows disbelieve such luck: but he believes,
He lets them pick the bones, laugh at him in their sleeves:
He 's off and after us,—one speck, one spot, one ball
Grows bigger, bound on bound,—one wolf as good as all!
Oh but I know the trick! Have at the snaky tongue!
That 's the right way with wolves! Go, tell your mates
I wrung
The panting morsel out, left you to howl your worst!
Now for it—now! Ah me! I know him—thrice-accurst
Satan-face,—him to the end my foe!

"All fight 's in vain:
This time the green brass points pierce to my very brain.
I fall—fall as I ought—quite on the babe I guard:
I overspread with flesh the whole of him. Too hard

To die this way, torn piecemeal? Move hence? Not I
—one inch!
Gnaw through me, through and through: flat thus I lie
nor flinch!
O God, the feel of the fang furrowing my shoulder!—see!
It grinds—it grates the bone. O Kirill under me,
Could I do more? Beside he knew wolf's way to win:
I clung, closed round like wax: yet in he wedged and in,
Past my neck, past my breasts, my heart, until . . . how
feels
The onion-bulb your knife parts, pushing through its
peels,
Till out you scoop its clove wherein lie stalk and leaf
And bloom and seed unborn?

"That slew me: yes, in brief,
I died then, dead I lay doubtlessly till Droug stopped
Here, I suppose. I come to life, I find me propped
Thus—how or when or why,—I know not. Tell me,
friends,
All was a dream: laugh quick and say the nightmare
ends!
Soon I shall find my house: 't is over there: in proof,
Save for that chimney heaped with snow, you 'd see the
roof
Which holds my three—my two—my one—not one?

"Life 's mixed
With misery, yet we live—must live. The Satan fixed
His face on mine so fast, I took its print as pitch
Takes what it cools beneath. Ivàn Ivànovitch,
'T is you unharden me, you thaw, disperse the thing!
Only keep looking kind, the horror will not cling.
Your face smooths fast away each print of Satan. Tears
—What good they do! Life 's sweet, and all its after-years,
Ivàn Ivànovitch, I owe you! Yours am I!
May God reward you, dear!"

Down she sank. Solemnly
Ivàn rose, raised his axe,—for fitly, as she knelt,
Her head lay: well-apart, each side, her arms hung,—dealt
Lightning-swift thunder-strong one blow—no need of more!
Headless she knelt on still: that pine was sound at core
(Neighbours were used to say)—cast-iron-kernelled—which
Taxed for a second stroke Ivàn Ivànovitch.

The man was scant of words as strokes. "It had to be:
I could no other: God it was bade 'Act for me!'"

Then stooping, peering round—what is it now he lacks?
A proper strip of bark wherewith to wipe his axe.
Which done, he turns, goes in, closes the door behind.
The others mute remain, watching the blood-snake wind
Into a hiding-place among the splinter-heaps.

At length, still mute, all move: one lifts,—from where it steeps
Redder each ruddy rag of pine,—the head: two more
Take up the dripping body: then, mute still as before,
Move in a sort of march, march on till marching ends
Opposite to the church; where halting,—who suspends,
By its long hair, the thing, deposits in its place
The piteous head: once more the body shows no trace
Of harm done: there lies whole the Loùscha, maid and wife
And mother, loved until this latest of her life.
Then all sit on the bank of snow which bounds a space
Kept free before the porch for judgment: just the place!

Presently all the souls, man, woman, child, which make
The village up, are found assembling for the sake
Of what is to be done. The very Jews are there:
A Gipsy troop, though bound with horses for the Fair,

Squats with the rest. Each heart with its conception seethes
And simmers, but no tongue speaks: one may say—none breathes.

Anon from out the church totters the Pope—the priest—
Hardly alive, so old, a hundred years at least.
With him, the Commune's head, a hoary senior too,
Starosta, that 's his style,—like Equity Judge with you,—
Natural Jurisconsult: then, fenced about with furs,
Pomeschìk,—Lord of the Land, who wields—and none demurs—
A power of life and death. They stoop, survey the corpse.

Then, straightened on his staff, the Stàrosta—the thorpe's
Sagaciousest old man—hears what you just have heard,
From Droug's first inrush, all, up to Ivàn's last word
"God bade me act for him: I dared not disobey!"

Silence—the Pomeschìk broke with "A wild wrong way
Of righting wrong—if wrong there were, such wrath to rouse!
Why was not law observed? What article allows
Whoso may please to play the judge, and, judgment dealt,
Play executioner, as promptly as we pelt

To death, without appeal, the vermin whose sole fault
Has been—it dared to leave the darkness of its vault,
Intrude upon our day! Too sudden and too rash!
What was this woman's crime? Suppose the church should crash
Down where I stand, your lord: bound are my serfs to dare
Their utmost that I 'scape: yet, if the crashing scare
My children,—as you are,—if sons fly, one and all,
Leave father to his fate,—poor cowards though I call
The runaways, I pause before I claim their life
Because they prized it more than mine. I would each wife
Died for her husband's sake, each son to save his sire:
'T is glory, I applaud—scarce duty, I require.
Ivàn Ivànovitch has done a deed that 's named
Murder by law and me: who doubts, may speak unblamed!"

All turned to the old Pope. "Ay, children, I am old—
How old, myself have got to know no longer. Rolled
Quite round, my orb of life, from infancy to age,
Seems passing back again to youth. A certain stage
At least I reach, or dream I reach, where I discern
Truer truths, laws behold more lawlike than we learn

When first we set our foot to tread the course I trod
With man to guide my steps: who leads me now is God.
'Your young men shall see visions:' and in my youth I saw
And paid obedience to man's visionary law:
'Your old men shall dream dreams:' and, in my age, a hand
Conducts me through the cloud round law to where I stand
Firm on its base,—know cause, who, before, knew effect.

"The world lies under me: and nowhere I detect
So great a gift as this—God's own—of human life.
'Shall the dead praise thee?' No! 'The whole live world is rife,
God, with thy glory,' rather! Life then, God's best of gifts,
For what shall man exchange? For life—when so he shifts
The weight and turns the scale, lets life for life restore
God's balance, sacrifice the less to gain the more,
Substitute—for low life, another's or his own—
Life large and liker God's who gave it: thus alone
May life extinguish life that life may trulier be!
How low this law descends on earth, is not for me
To trace: complexed becomes the simple, intricate
The plain, when I pursue law's winding. 'T is the straight

Outflow of law I know and name: to law, the fount
Fresh from God's footstool, friends, follow while I remount.

"A mother bears a child: perfection is complete
So far in such a birth. Enabled to repeat
The miracle of life,—herself was born so just
A type of womankind, that God sees fit to trust
Her with the holy task of giving life in turn.
Crowned by this crowning pride,—how say you, should she spurn
Regality—discrowned, unchilded, by her choice
Of barrenness exchanged for fruit which made rejoice
Creation, though life's self were lost in giving birth
To life more fresh and fit to glorify God's earth?
How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
Kindled to light the world—aware of sparks that scorch,
Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings
The mother drops the child! Among what monstrous things
Shall she be classed? Because of motherhood, each male
Yields to his partner place, sinks proudly in the scale:
His strength owned weakness, wit—folly, and courage—fear,
Beside the female proved male's mistress—only here.

The fox-dam, hunger-pined, will slay the felon sire
Who dares assault her whelp: the beaver, stretched on fire,
Will die without a groan: no pang avails to wrest
Her young from where they hide—her sanctuary breast.
What 's here then? Answer me, thou dead one, as, I trow,
Standing at God's own bar, he bids thee answer now!
Thrice crowned wast thou—each crown of pride, a child—thy charge!
Where are they? Lost? Enough: no need that thou enlarge
On how or why the loss: life left to utter 'lost'
Condemns itself beyond appeal. The soldier's post
Guards from the foe's attack the camp he sentinels:
That he no traitor proved, this and this only tells—
Over the corpse of him trod foe to foe's success.
Yet—one by one thy crowns torn from thee—thou no less
To scare the world, shame God,—livedst! I hold He saw
The unexampled sin, ordained the novel law,
Whereof first instrument was first intelligence
Found loyal here. I hold that, failing human sense,
The very earth had oped, sky fallen, to efface
Humanity's new wrong, motherhood's first disgrace.

Earth oped not, neither fell the sky, for prompt was found
A man and man enough, head-sober and heart-sound,
Ready to hear God's voice, resolute to obey.
Ivàn Ivànovitch, I hold, has done, this day,
No otherwise than did, in ages long ago,
Moses when he made known the purport of that flow
Of fire athwart the law's twain-tables! I proclaim
Ivàn Ivànovitch God's servant!"

At which name
Uprose that creepy whisper from out the crowd, is wont
To swell and surge and sink when fellow-men confront
A punishment that falls on fellow flesh and blood,
Appallingly beheld—shudderingly understood,
No less, to be the right, the just, the merciful.
"God's servant!" hissed the crowd.

When that Amen grew dull
And died away and left acquittal plain adjudged,
"Amen!" last sighed the lord. "There 's none shall say I grudged
Escape from punishment in such a novel case.
Deferring to old age and holy life,—be grace
Granted! say I. No less, scruples might shake a sense
Firmer than I boast mine. Law 's law, and evidence

Of breach therein lies plain,—blood-red-bright,—all may see!
Yet all absolve the deed: absolved the deed must be!

"And next—as mercy rules the hour—methinks 't were well
You signify forthwith its sentence, and dispel
The doubts and fears, I judge, which busy now the head
Law puts a halter round—a halo—you, instead!
Ivàn Ivànovitch—what think you he expects
Will follow from his feat? Go, tell him—law protects
Murder, for once: no need he longer keep behind
The Sacred Pictures—where skulks Innocence enshrined,
Or I missay! Go, some! You others, haste and hide
The dismal object there: get done, whate'er betide!"

So, while the youngers raised the corpse, the elders trooped
Silently to the house: where halting, someone stooped,
Listened beside the door; all there was silent too.
Then they held counsel; then pushed door and, passing through,
Stood in the murderer's presence.
Ivàn Ivànovitch
Knelt, building on the floor that Kremlin rare and rich

He deftly cut and carved on lazy winter nights.
Some five young faces watched, breathlessly, as, to rights,
Piece upon piece, he reared the fabric nigh complete.
Stèscha, Ivàn's old mother, sat spinning by the heat
Of the oven where his wife Kàtia stood baking bread.
Ivàn's self, as he turned his honey-coloured head,
Was just in act to drop, 'twixt fir-cones,—each a dome,—
The scooped-out yellow gourd presumably the home
Of Kolokol the Big: the bell, therein to hitch,
—An acorn-cup—was ready: Ivàn Ivànovitch
Turned with it in his mouth.

They told him he was free
As air to walk abroad. "How otherwise?" asked he.

TRAY.

Sing me a hero! Quench my thirst
Of soul, ye bards!
Quoth Bard the first:
"Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
His helm and eke his habergeon . . ."
Sir Olaf and his bard——!

"That sin-scathed brow" (quoth Bard the second)
"That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned
My hero to some steep, beneath
Which precipice smiled tempting death . .
You too without your host have reckoned!

"A beggar-child" (let 's hear this third!)
"Sat on a quay's edge: like a bird
Sang to herself at careless play,
And fell into the stream. 'Dismay!
Help, you the standers-by!' None stirred.

" Bystanders reason, think of wives
And children ere they risk their lives.
Over the balustrade has bounced
A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
Plumb on the prize. ' How well he dives !

" ' Up he comes with the child, see, tight
In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
A depth of ten feet—twelve, I bet !
Good dog ! What, off again? There 's yet
Another child to save ? All right !

" ' How strange we saw no other fall !
It 's instinct in the animal.
Good dog ! But he 's a long while under :
If he got drowned I should not wonder—
Strong current, that against the wall !

" ' Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
—What may the thing be ? Well, that 's prime !
Now, did you ever ? Reason reigns
In man alone, since all Tray's pains
Have fished—the child's doll from the slime ! '

" And so, amid the laughter gay,
Trotted my hero off,—old Tray,—

Till somebody, prerogatived
With reason, reasoned: 'Why he dived,
His brain would show us, I should say.

"'John, go and catch—or, if needs be,
Purchase—that animal for me!
By vivisection, at expense
Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
How brain secretes dog's soul, we 'll see!'"

NED BRATTS.

'T was Bedford Special Assize, one daft Midsummer's Day:
A broiling blasting June,—was never its like, men say.
Corn stood sheaf-ripe already, and trees looked yellow as that;
Ponds drained dust-dry, the cattle lay foaming around each flat.
Inside town, dogs went mad, and folk kept bibbing beer
While the parsons prayed for rain. 'T was horrible, yes —but queer:
Queer—for the sun laughed gay, yet nobody moved a hand
To work one stroke at his trade: as given to understand
That all was come to a stop, work and such worldly ways,
And the world's old self about to end in a merry blaze.

Midsummer's Day moreover was the first of Bedford Fair,
With Bedford Town's tag-rag and bobtail a-bowsing there.

But the Court House, Quality crammed: through doors
ope, windows wide,
High on the Bench you saw sit Lordships side by side.
There frowned Chief Justice Jukes, fumed learned
Brother Small,
And fretted their fellow Judge: like threshers, one and all,
Of a reek with laying down the law in a furnace. Why?
Because their lungs breathed flame—the regular crowd
forbye—
From gentry pouring in—quite a nosegay, to be sure:
How else could they pass the time, six mortal hours
endure
Till night should extinguish day, when matters might
haply mend?
Meanwhile no bad resource was—watching begin and end
Some trial for life and death, in a brisk five minutes'
space,
And betting which knave would 'scape, which hang, from
his sort of face.

So, their Lordships toiled and moiled, and a deal of work
was done
(I warrant) to justify the mirth of the crazy sun

As this and 't other lout, struck dumb at the sudden show
Of red robes and white wigs, boggled nor answered "Boh!"
When asked why he, Tom Styles, should not—because Jack Nokes
Had stolen the horse—be hanged: for Judges must have their jokes,
And louts must make allowance—let 's say, for some blue fly
Which punctured a dewy scalp where the frizzles stuck awry—
Else Tom had fleered scot-free, so nearly over and done
Was the main of the job. Full-measure, the gentles enjoyed their fun,
As a twenty-five were tried, rank puritans caught at prayer
In a cow-house and laid by the heels,—have at 'em, devil may care!—
And ten were prescribed the whip, and ten a brand on the cheek,
And five a slit of the nose—just leaving enough to tweak.

Well, things at jolly high-tide, amusement steeped in fire,
While noon smote fierce the roof's red tiles to heart's desire,

The Court a-simmer with smoke, one ferment of oozy flesh,
One spirituous humming musk mount-mounting until its mesh
Entoiled all heads in a fluster, and Serjeant Postlethwayte
—Dashing the wig oblique as he mopped his oily pate—
Cried "Silence, or I grow grease! No loophole lets in air?
Jurymen,—Guilty, Death! Gainsay me if you dare!"
—Things at this pitch, I say,—what hubbub without the doors?
What laughs, shrieks, hoots and yells, what rudest of uproars?

Bounce through the barrier throng a bulk comes rolling vast!
Thumps, kicks,—no manner of use!—spite of them rolls at last
Into the midst a ball which, bursting, brings to view
Publican Black Ned Bratts and Tabby his big wife too:
Both in a muck-sweat, both . . . were never such eyes uplift
At the sight of yawning hell, such nostrils—snouts that sniffed
Sulphur, such mouths a-gape ready to swallow flame!
Horrified, hideous, frank fiend-faces! yet, all the same,

Mixed with a certain . . . eh? how shall I dare style—
mirth
The desperate grin of the guess that, could they break
from earth,
Heaven was above, and hell might rage in impotence
Below the saved, the saved!

"Confound you! (no offence!)
Out of our way,—push, wife! Yonder their Worships
be!"
Ned Bratts has reached the bar, and "Hey, my Lords,"
roars he,
"A Jury of life and death, Judges the prime of the
land,
Constables, javelineers,—all met, if I understand,
To decide so knotty a point as whether 't was Jack or
Joan
Robbed the henroost, pinched the pig, hit the King's
Arms with a stone,
Dropped the baby down the well, left the tithesman in
the lurch,
Or, three whole Sundays running, not once attended
church!
What a pother—do these deserve the parish-stocks or
whip,
More or less brow to brand, much or little nose to snip,—

When, in our Public, plain stand we—that 's we stand here,
I and my Tab, brass-bold, brick-built of beef and beer,
—Do not we, slut? Step forth and show your beauty, jade!
Wife of my bosom—that 's the word now! What a trade
We drove! None said us nay: nobody loved his life
So little as wag a tongue against us,—did they, wife?
Yet they knew us all the while, in their hearts, for what we are
—Worst couple, rogue and quean, unhanged—search near and far!
Eh, Tab? The pedlar, now—o'er his noggin—who warned a mate
To cut and run, nor risk his pack where its loss of weight
Was the least to dread,—aha, how we two laughed a-good
As, stealing round the midden, he came on where I stood
With billet poised and raised,—you, ready with the rope,—
Ah, but that 's past, that 's sin repented of, we hope!
Men knew us for that same, yet safe and sound stood we!
The lily-livered knaves knew too (I 've baulked a d——)
Our keeping the 'Pied Bull' was just a mere pretence:
Too slow the pounds make food, drink, lodging, from out the pence!

There 's not a stoppage to travel has chanced, this ten long year,
No break into hall or grange, no lifting of nag or steer,
Not a single roguery, from the clipping of a purse
To the cutting of a throat, but paid us toll. Od's curse!
When Gipsy Smouch made bold to cheat us of our due,
—Eh, Tab? the Squire's strong-box we helped the rascal to—
I think he pulled a face, next Sessions' swinging-time!
He danced the jig that needs no floor,—and, here 's the prime,
'T was Scroggs that houghed the mare! Ay, those were busy days!

"Well, there we flourished brave, like scripture-trees called bays,
Faring high, drinking hard, in money up to head
—Not to say, boots and shoes, when . . . Zounds, I nearly said—
Lord, to unlearn one's language! How shall we labour, wife?
Have you, fast hold, the Book? Grasp, grip it, for your life!

See, sirs, here 's life, salvation! Here 's—hold but out
my breath—
When did I speak so long without once swearing?
'Sdeath,
No, nor unhelped by ale since man and boy! And yet
All yesterday I had to keep my whistle wet
While reading Tab this Book: book? don't say 'book'—
they 're plays,
Songs, ballads and the like: here 's no such strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven stars out full-
flare!
Tab, help and tell! I 'm hoarse. A mug! or—no, a
prayer!
Dip for one out of the Book! Who wrote it in the Jail
—He plied his pen unhelped by beer, sirs, I 'll be bail!

"I 've got my second wind. In trundles she—that 's
Tab.
'Why, Gammer, what 's come now, that—bobbing like a
crab
On Yule-tide bowl—your head 's a-work and both your
eyes
Break loose? Afeard, you fool? As if the dead can
rise!
Say—Bagman Dick was found last May with fuddling-cap
Stuffed in his mouth: to choke 's a natural mishap!'

'Gaffer, be—blessed,' cries she, 'and Bagman Dick as well!
I, you, and he are damned: this Public is our hell:
We live in fire: live coals don't feel!—once quenched, they learn—
Cinders do, to what dust they moulder while they burn!'

"'If you don't speak straight out,' says I—belike I swore—
'A knobstick, well you know the taste of, shall, once more,
Teach you to talk, my maid!' She ups with such a face,
Heart sunk inside me. 'Well, pad on, my prate-apace!'

"'I've been about those laces we need for . . . never mind!
If henceforth they tie hands, 't is mine they'll have to bind.
You know who makes them best—the Tinker in our cage,
Pulled-up for gospelling, twelve years ago: no age
To try another trade,—yet, so he scorned to take
Money he did not earn, he taught himself the make
Of laces, tagged and tough—Dick Bagman found them so!
Good customers were we! Well, last week, you must know

His girl,—the blind young chit, who hawks about his wares,—
She takes it in her head to come no more—such airs
These hussies have! Yet, since we need a stoutish lace,—
"I 'll to the jail-bird father, abuse her to his face!"
So, first I filled a jug to give me heart, and then,
Primed to the proper pitch, I posted to their den—
Patmore—they style their prison! I tip the turnkey, catch
My heart up, fix my face, and fearless lift the latch—
Both arms a-kimbo, in bounce with a good round oath
Ready for rapping out: no "Lawks" nor "By my troth!"

"'There sat my man, the father. He looked up: what one feels
When heart that leapt to mouth drops down again to heels!
He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when drinking out the night,
And in, the day, earth grow another something quite
Under the sun's first stare? I stood a very stone.

"'"Woman!" (a fiery tear he put in every tone),

"How should my child frequent your house where lust
is sport,
Violence—trade? Too true! I trust no vague report.
Her angel's hand, which stops the sight of sin, leaves
clear
The other gate of sense, lets outrage through the ear.
What has she heard!—which, heard shall never be
again.
Better lack food than feast, a Dives in the—wain
Or reign or train—of Charles!" (His language was not
ours:
'T is my belief, God spoke: no tinker has such powers).
"Bread, only bread they bring—my laces: if we broke
Your lump of leavened sin, the loaf's first crumb would
choke!"

"'Down on my marrow-bones! Then all at once rose
he:
His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes were suns to
see:
Up went his hands: "Through flesh, I reach, I read thy
soul!
So may some stricken tree look blasted, bough and bole,
Champed by the fire-tooth, charred without, and yet,
thrice-bound
With dreriment about, within may life be found,

A prisoned power to branch and blossom as before,
Could but the gardener cleave the cloister, reach the core,
Loosen the vital sap: yet where shall help be found?
Who says 'How save it?'—nor 'Why cumbers it the ground?'
Woman, that tree art thou! All sloughed about with scurf,
Thy stag-horns fright the sky, thy snake-roots sting the turf!
Drunkenness, wantonness, theft, murder gnash and gnarl
Thine outward, case thy soul with coating like the marle
Satan stamps flat upon each head beneath his hoof!
And how deliver such? The strong men keep aloof,
Lover and friend stand far, the mocking ones pass by,
Tophet gapes wide for prey: lost soul, despair and die!
What then? 'Look unto me and be ye saved!' saith God:
'I strike the rock, outstreats the life-stream at my rod!
Be your sins scarlet, wool shall they seem like,—although
As crimson red, yet turn white as the driven snow!'"

"'There, there, there! All I seem to somehow understand
Is—that, if I reached home, 't was through the guiding hand

Of his blind girl which led and led me through the streets
And out of town and up to door again. What greets
First thing my eye, as limbs recover from their swoon?
A book—this Book she gave at parting. "Father's boon—
The Book he wrote: it reads as if he spoke himself:
He cannot preach in bonds, so,—take it down from shelf
When you want counsel,—think you hear his very voice!"

"'Wicked dear Husband, first despair and then rejoice!
Dear wicked Husband, waste no tick of moment more,
Be saved like me, bald trunk! There's greenness yet at core,
Sap under slough! Read, read!'

"Let me take breath, my lords!
I'd like to know, are these—hers, mine, or Bunyan's words?
I'm 'wildered—scarce with drink,—nowise with drink alone!
You'll say, with heat: but heat's no stuff to split a stone

Like this black boulder—this flint heart of mine: the
Book—
That dealt the crashing blow! Sirs, here's the fist that
shook
His beard till Wrestler Jem howled like a just-lugged
bear!
You had brained me with a feather: at once I grew
aware
Christmas was meant for me. A burden at your back,
Good Master Christmas? Nay,—yours was that Joseph's
sack,
—Or whose it was,—which held the cup,—compared
with mine!
Robbery loads my loins, perjury cracks my chine,
Adultery . . . nay, Tab, you pitched me as I flung!
One word, I 'll up with fist . . . No, sweet spouse, hold
your tongue!

"I 'm hasting to the end. The Book, sirs—take and
read!
You have my history in a nutshell,—ay, indeed!
It must off, my burden! See,—slack straps and into pit,
Roll, reach the bottom, rest, rot there—a plague on it!
For a mountain 's sure to fall and bury Bedford Town,
'Destruction'—that 's the name, and fire shall burn it
down!

O 'scape the wrath in time! Time 's now, if not too late.
How can I pilgrimage up to the wicket-gate?
Next comes Despond the slough: not that I fear to pull
Through mud, and dry my clothes at brave House Beautiful—
But it 's late in the day, I reckon: had I left years ago
Town, wife, and children dear . . . Well, Christmas did, you know!—
Soon I had met in the valley and tried my cudgel's strength
On the enemy horned and winged, a-straddle across its length!
Have at his horns, thwick—thwack: they snap, see! Hoof and hoof—
Bang, break the fetlock-bones! For love's sake, keep aloof
Angels! I 'm man and match,—this cudgel for my flail,—
To thresh him, hoofs and horns, bat's wing and serpent's tail!
A chance gone by! But then, what else does Hopeful ding
Into the deafest ear except—hope, hope 's the thing?

Too late i' the day for me to thrid the windings : but
There 's still a way to win the race by death's short cut!
Did Master Faithful need climb the Delightful Mounts?
No, straight to Vanity Fair,—a fair, by all accounts,
Such as is held outside,—lords, ladies, grand and gay,—
Says he in the face of them, just what you hear me say.
And the Judges brought him in guilty, and brought him out
To die in the market-place—St. Peter's Green 's about
The same thing: there they flogged, flayed, buffeted, lanced with knives,
Pricked him with swords,—I 'll swear, he 'd full a cat's nine lives,—
So to his end at last came Faithful,—ha, ha, he!
Who holds the highest card? for there stands hid, you see,
Behind the rabble-rout, a chariot, pair and all :
He 's in, he 's off, he 's up, through clouds, at trumpet-call,
Carried the nearest way to Heaven-gate ! Odds my life—
Has nobody a sword to spare? not even a knife?
Then hang me, draw and quarter! Tab—do the same by her!
O Master Worldly-Wiseman . . . that 's Master Interpreter,
Take the will, not the deed! Our gibbet 's handy close:
Forestall Last Judgment-Day ! Be kindly, not morose !

There wants no earthly judge-and-jurying: here we stand—
Sentence our guilty selves: so, hang us out of hand!
Make haste for pity's sake! A single moment's loss
Means — Satan's lord once more: his whisper shoots across
All singing in my heart, all praying in my brain,
'It comes of heat and beer!'—hark how he guffaws plain!
'To-morrow you'll wake bright, and, in a safe skin, hug
Your sound selves, Tab and you, over a foaming jug!
You've had such qualms before, time out of mind!' He's right!
Did not we kick and cuff and curse away, that night
When home we blindly reeled, and left poor humpback Joe
I' the lurch to pay for what . . . somebody did, you know!
Both of us maundered then 'Lame humpback,—never more
Will he come limping, drain his tankard at our door!
He'll swing, while—somebody . . . ' Says Tab, 'No, for I'll peach!'
'I'm for you, Tab,' cries I, 'there's rope enough for each!'

So blubbered we, and bussed, and went to bed upon
The grace of Tab's good thought: by morning, all was gone!
We laughed—'What 's life to him, a cripple of no account?'
Oh, waves increase around—I feel them mount and mount!
Hang us! To-morrow brings Tom Bearward with his bears:
One new black-muzzled brute beats Sackerson, he swears:
(Sackerson, for my money!) And, baiting o'er, the Brawl
They lead on Turner's Patch, — lads, lasses, up tails all,—
I 'm i' the thick o' the throng! That means the Iron Cage,
—Means the Lost Man inside! Where 's hope for such as wage
War against light? Light 's left, light 's here, I hold light still,
So does Tab—make but haste to hang us both! You will?"

I promise, when he stopped you might have heard a mouse
Squeak, such a death-like hush sealed up the old Mote House.

But when the mass of man sank meek upon his knees,
While Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse "Do hang us, please!"
Why, then the waters rose, no eye but ran with tears,
Hearts heaved, heads thumped, until, paying all past arrears
Of pity and sorrow, at last a regular scream outbroke
Of triumph, joy and praise.

My Lord Chief Justice spoke,
First mopping brow and cheek, where still, for one that budged,
Another bead broke fresh: "What Judge, that ever judged
Since first the world began, judged such a case as this?
Why, Master Bratts, long since, folk smelt you out, I wis!
I had my doubts, i' faith, each time you played the fox
Convicting geese of crime in yonder witness-box—
Yea, much did I misdoubt, the thief that stole her eggs
Was hardly goosey's self at Reynard's game, i' feggs!
Yet thus much was to praise—you spoke to point, direct—
Swore you heard, saw the theft: no jury could suspect—
Dared to suspect,—I 'll say,—a spot in white so clear:
Goosey was throttled, true: but thereof godly fear

Came of example set, much as our laws intend;
And, though a fox confessed, you proved the Judge's
friend.
What if I had my doubts? Suppose I gave them breath,
Brought you to bar: what work to do, ere 'Guilty,
Death,'—
Had paid our pains! What heaps of witnesses to drag
From holes and corners, paid from out the County's
bag!
Trial three dog-days long! *Amicus Curiæ*—that 's
Your title, no dispute—truth-telling Master Bratts!
Thank you, too, Mistress Tab! Why doubt one word
you say?
Hanging you both deserve, hanged both shall be this
day!
The tinker needs must be a proper man. I 've heard
He lies in Jail long since: if Quality 's good word
Warrants me letting loose,—some householder, I mean—
Freeholder, better still,—I don't say but—between
Now and next Sessions . . . Well! Consider of his
case,
I promise to, at least: we owe him so much grace.
Not that—no, God forbid!—I lean to think, as you,
The grace that such repent is any jail-bird's due:
I rather see the fruit of twelve years' pious reign—
Astræa Redux, Charles restored his rights again!

—Of which, another time! I somehow feel a peace
Stealing across the world. May deeds like this increase!
So, Master Sheriff, stay that sentence I pronounced
On those two dozen odd: deserving to be trounced
Soundly, and yet . . . well, well, at all events despatch
This pair of—shall I say, sinner-saints?—ere we catch
Their jail-distemper too. Stop tears, or I 'll indite
All weeping Bedfordshire for turning Bunyanite!"

So, forms were galloped through. If Justice, on the spur,
Proved somewhat expeditious, would Quality demur?
And happily hanged were they,—why lengthen out my tale?—
Where Bunyan's Statue stands facing where stood his Jail.

DRAMATIC IDYLS.

SECOND SERIES.

"You are sick, that 's sure"—they say:
"Sick of what?"—they disagree.
"'T is the brain"—thinks Doctor A;
"'T is the heart"—holds Doctor B;
"The liver—my life I 'd lay!"
"The lungs!" "The lights!"
Ah me!
So ignorant of man's whole
Of bodily organs plain to see—
So sage and certain, frank and free,
About what 's under lock and key—
Man's soul!

DRAMATIC IDYLS.

SECOND SERIES.

1880.

ECHETLOS.

HERE is a story shall stir you! Stand up, Greeks dead and gone,
Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling on,
Did the deed and saved the world, for the day was Marathon!

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and fought away
In his tribe and file: up, back, out, down—was the spear-arm play:
Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all spear-arms a-swing that day!

But one man kept no rank and his sole arm plied no spear,
As a flashing came and went, and a form i' the van, the rear,
Brightened the battle up, for he blazed now there, now here.

Nor helmed nor shielded, he! but, a goat-skin all his wear,
Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's limbs broad and bare,
Went he ploughing on and on: he pushed with a ploughman's share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies on whom the shark
Precipitates his bulk? Did the right-wing halt when, stark
On his heap of slain lay stretched Kallimachos Polemarch?

Did the steady phalanx falter? To the rescue, at the need,
The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing Greek earth of weed,
As he routed through the Sakian and rooted up the Mede.

But the deed done, battle won,—nowhere to be descried
On the meadow, by the stream, at the marsh,—look far and wide
From the foot of the mountain, no, to the last blood-plashed seaside,—

Not anywhere on view blazed the large limbs thonged and brown,
Shearing and clearing still with the share before which—down
To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he ploughed for Greece, that clown!

How spake the Oracle? "Care for no name at all!
Say but just this: 'We praise one helpful whom we call
The Holder of the Ploughshare.' The great deed ne'er grows small."

Not the great name! Sing—woe for the great name Miltiadés
And its end at Paros isle! Woe for Themistokles
—Satrap in Sardis court! Name not the clown like these!

CLIVE.

I AND Clive were friends—and why not? Friends! I
think you laugh, my lad.
Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives
—egad,
England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on
to speak—
"Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades—" with a
tongue thrust in your cheek!
Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes,
Clive was man,
I was, am and ever shall be—mouse, nay, mouse of all
its clan
Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for
fame;
While the man Clive—he fought Plassy, spoiled the
clever foreign game,
Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o'er my punch

(You away) I sit of evenings,—silence, save for biscuit-crunch,
Black, unbroken,—thought grows busy, thrids each path-way of old years,
Notes this forthright, that meander, till the long-past life appears
Like an outspread map of country plodded through, each mile and rood,
Once, and well remembered still: I 'm startled in my solitude
Ever and anon by—what 's the sudden mocking light that breaks
On me as I slap the table till no rummer-glass but shakes
While I ask—aloud, I do believe, God help me!—"Was it thus?
Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one step for us—"
(Us,—you were not born, I grant, but surely some day born would be)
"—One bold step had gained a province" (figurative talk, you see)
"Got no end of wealth and honour,—yet I stood stock still no less?"
—"For I was not Clive," you comment: but it needs no Clive to guess

Wealth were handy, honour ticklish, did no writing on the wall
Warn me "Trespasser, 'ware man-traps!" Him who braves that notice—call
Hero! none of such heroics suit myself who read plain words,
Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says the land 's the Lord's:
Louts then—what avail the thousand, noisy in a smock-frocked ring,
All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive their king?
Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot before
T'other in that dark direction, though I stand for evermore
Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No! By-and-by
Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less wise than I.
Don't object "Why call him friend, then?" Power is power, my boy, and still
Marks a man,—God's gift magnific, exercised for good or ill.
You 've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what was a tiger's skin:

Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet in!
True, he murdered half a village, so his own death came to pass;
Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage—ah, the brute he was!
Why, that Clive,—that youth, that greenhorn, that quill-driving clerk, in fine,—
He sustained a siege in Arcot. . . But the world knows! Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring Clive in? Oh, you mentioned "fear"!
Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds, about the orb
Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely, threatened to absorb
Ray by ray its noontide brilliance,—friendship might, with steadier eye
Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze—all majesty.
Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a castle 's new:

None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold
sure for shoe
'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the
impervious pile
As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.
Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From without
Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates
about
Towers—the heap he kicks now! turrets—just the measure
of his cane!
Will that do? Observe moreover—(same similitude
again)—
Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of cannonade:
'T is when foes are foiled and fighting 's finished that
vile rains invade,
Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-birds congregating
find no holes
Fit to build in like the topmost sockets made for
banner-poles.
So Clive crumbled slow in London—crashed at last.

A week before,
Dining with him,—after trying churchyard-chat of days
of yore,—

Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece, foot-
piece, when they lean
Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined
Past between.
As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's extin-
guishment
By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers
went
Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor,—
"One more throw
Try for Clive!" thought I: "Let 's venture some good
rattling question!" So—
"Come, Clive, tell us"—out I blurted—"what to tell in
turn, years hence,
When my boy—suppose I have one—asks me on what
evidence
I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every
whit
Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marlboroughs and—
what said Pitt?—
Frederick the Fierce himself! Clive told me once"—I
want to say—
"Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the bell
away
—In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the mob's
rough guess—

Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called
courageousness!
Come! what moment of the minute, what speck-centre
in the wide
Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly deified?
(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow bold this whole-
some Port!)
If a friend has leave to question,—when were you most
brave, in short?"

Up he arched his brows o' the instant—formidably Clive
again.
"When was I most brave? I 'd answer, were the instance
half as plain
As another instance that 's a brain-lodged crystal—curse
it!—here
Freezing when my memory touches—ugh!—the time I
felt most fear.
Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed fear—anyhow,
Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered, since I shiver
now."

"Fear!" smiled I. "Well, that 's the rarer: that 's a
specimen to seek,
Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks, Lord Clive's
Fear, Unique!*"

Down his brows dropped. On the table painfully he
pored as though
Tracing, in the stains and streaks there, thoughts en-
crusted long ago.
When he spoke 't was like a lawyer reading word by word
some will,
Some blind jungle of a statement,—beating on and on
until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

"This fell in my factor-days.
Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one must game, or
drink, or craze.
I chose gaming: and, — because your high-flown
gamesters hardly take
Umbrage at a factor's elbow if the factor pays his stake,—
I was winked at in a circle where the company was choice,
Captain This and Major That, men high of colour, loud
of voice,
Yet indulgent, condescending to the modest juvenile
Who not merely risked but lost his hard-earned guineas
with a smile.

"Down I sat to cards, one evening,—had for my antagonist
Somebody whose name 's a secret—you 'll know why—
so, if you list,

Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son of Mars from
head to heel!
Play commenced: and, whether Cocky fancied that a
clerk must feel
Quite sufficient honour came of bending over one green
baize,
I the scribe with him the warrior,—guessed no penman
dared to raise
Shadow of objection should the honour stay but playing
end
More or less abruptly,—whether disinclined he grew to
spend
Practice strictly scientific on a booby born to stare
At—not ask of—lace-and-ruffles if the hand they hide
plays fair,—
Anyhow, I marked a movement when he bade me 'Cut!'

"I rose.
'Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I'm a novice:
knowledge grows.
What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?'

"Never did a thunder-clap
Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with Chloe in his lap,
As my word and gesture (down I flung my cards to join
the pack)

Fired the man of arms, whose visage, simply red before, turned black.

When he found his voice, he stammered 'That expression once again!'

"'Well, you forced a card and cheated!'

"'Possibly a factor's brain,
Busied with his all-important balance of accounts, may deem
Weighing words superfluous trouble: *cheat* to clerkly ears may seem
Just the joke for friends to venture: but we are not friends, you see!
When a gentleman is joked with,—if he's good at repartee,
He rejoins, as do I—Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw in full!
Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through your skull
Lets in light and teaches manners to what brain it finds! Choose quick—
Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim yon candle-wick!'

"'Well, you cheated!'

"Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched and teeth were ground.
End it! no time like the present! Captain, yours were our disgrace!
No delay, begin and finish! Stand back, leave the pair a space!
Let civilians be instructed: henceforth simply ply the pen,
Fly the sword! This clerk 's no swordsman? Suit him with a pistol, then!
Even odds! A dozen paces 'twixt the most and least expert
Make a dwarf a giant's equal: nay, the dwarf, if he 's alert,
Likelier hits the broader target!'

"Up we stood accordingly.
As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul's thirst to try
Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on and stamp out
Every spark of his existence, that,—crept close to, curled about
By that toying tempting teasing fool-forefinger's middle joint,—

Don't you guess?—the trigger yielded. Gone my chance!
and at the point
Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch above
his head
Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I was
dead.

"Up he marched in flaming triumph—'t was his right,
mind!—up, within
Just an arm's length. 'Now, my clerkling,' chuckled
Cocky with a grin
As the levelled piece quite touched me, 'Now, Sir
Counting-House, repeat
That expression which I told you proved bad manners!
Did I cheat?'

"'Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this
moment, know as well.
As for me, my homely breeding bids you—fire and go to
Hell!'

"Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy barrel,
flurried wrist,
Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, 'Laugh at
Hell who list,

I can't! God's no fable either. Did this boy's eye
wink once? No!
There 's no standing him and Hell and God all three
against me,—so,
I did cheat!'

"And down he threw the pistol, out rushed—
by the door
Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or
floor,
He effected disappearance—I 'll engage no glance was
sent
That way by a single starer, such a blank astonishment
Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking—mute they
stood as mice

"Mute not long, though! Such reaction, such a hubbub
in a trice!
'Rogue and rascal! Who 'd have thought it? What 's
to be expected next,
When His Majesty's Commission serves a sharper as
pretext
For . . . But where 's the need of wasting time now?
Nought requires delay:
Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be wiped
away

Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No,
indeed
Drum and fife must play the Rogue's March, rank and
file be free to speed
Tardy marching on the rogue's part by appliance in the rear
—Kicks administered shall right this wronged civilian,—
never fear,
Mister Clive, for—though a clerk—you bore yourself—
suppose we say—
Just as would beseem a soldier!'

"'Gentlemen, attention—pray!
First, one word!'

"I passed each speaker severally in review.
When I had precise their number, names and styles, and
fully knew
Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend,—
why, then——

"'Some five minutes since, my life lay—as you all saw,
gentlemen—
At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single voice
was raised
In arrest of judgment, not one tongue—before my powder
blazed—

Ventured "Can it be the youngster blundered, really seemed to mark
Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the dark,
Guess at random,—still, for sake of fair play—what if for a freak,
In a fit of absence,—such things have been!—if our friend proved weak
—What's the phrase?—corrected fortune! Look into the case, at least!"
Who dared interpose between the altar's victim and the priest?
Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whosoever, all or each,
To the disadvantage of the man who spared me, utters speech
—To his face, behind his back,—that speaker has to do with me:
Me who promise, if positions change and mine the chance should be,
Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!'

"Twenty-five
Years ago this matter happened: and 't is certain," added Clive,
"Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a single breath

Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout his life, or since his death,
For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than you.
All I know is—Cocky had one chance more; how he used it,—grew
Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back again
Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in his train,—
That 's for you to judge. Reprieval I procured, at any rate.
Ugh—the memory of that minute's fear makes gooseflesh rise! Why prate
Longer? You 've my story, there 's your instance: fear I did, you see!"

"Well"—I hardly kept from laughing—"if I see it, thanks must be
Wholly to your Lordship's candour. Not that—in a common case—
When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one's face,
I should underrate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve!
'T is no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor swerve.
Fear I naturally look for—unless, of all men alive,

I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.
Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death—the whole world knows—
Came to somewhat closer quarters."

Quarters? Had we come to blows,
Clive and I, you had not wondered—up he sprang so, out he rapped
Such a round of oaths—no matter! I'll endeavour to adapt
To our modern usage words he—well, 't was friendly licence—flung
At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

"You—a soldier? You—at Plassy? Yours the faculty to nick
Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,
—At his mercy, at his malice,—has you, through some stupid inch
Undefended in your bulwark? Thus laid open,—not to flinch
—That needs courage, you'll concede me. Then, look here! Suppose the man,

Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span
Distant from my temple,—curse him!—quietly had bade me 'There!
Keep your life, calumniator!—worthless life I freely spare:
Mine you freely would have taken—murdered me and my good fame
Both at once—and all the better! Go, and thank your own bad aim
Which permits me to forgive you! What if, with such words as these,
He had cast away his weapon? How should I have borne me, please?
Nay, I 'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, remained—
Pick his weapon up and use it on myself. I so had gained
Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still
Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will."

"Such the turn," said I, "the matter takes with you? Then I abate
—No, by not one jot nor tittle,—of your act my estimate.

Fear—I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me,
plain enough—
Call it desperation, madness—never mind! for here 's in
rough
Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome
disgrace.
True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against
God's face
—None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church
at times,
Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in
foreign climes
Rub some marks away—not all, though! We poor
sinners reach life's brink,
Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but
think
There 's advantage in what 's left us—ground to stand
on, time to call
'Lord, have mercy!' ere we topple over—do not leap,
that 's all!"

Oh, he made no answer,—re-absorbed into his cloud. I
caught
Something like "Yes—courage: only fools will call it
fear."
If aught

Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that I heard,
Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and uttered just the word
"Fearfully courageous!"—this, be sure, and nothing else I groaned.
I 'm no Clive, nor parson either: Clive's worst deed—we 'll hope condoned.

MULÉYKEH.

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried "A churl's!"
Or haply "God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!"
—"Nay," would a friend exclaim, "he needs nor pity nor scorn
More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand, picking pearls,
—Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead
On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night makes morn.

"What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán?
They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels the due,
Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
'God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,

Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,
And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land
and gold!"

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn—and right,
I say.
Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,
Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named,
that day.
'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we use to call
Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hóseyn,
I say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the stranger replies:
"Be sure
On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart
For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.
A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,
'For the vulgar—flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize
apart.'"

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyn's
tent,
And he casts his saddle down, and enters and "Peace!"
bids he.

"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend
the wrong.
'T is said of your Pearl—the price of a hundred camels
spent
In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is
far from me
Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last
too long."

Said Hóseyn "You feed young beasts a many, of famous
breed,
Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzennem:
There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs
the hill.
But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed
Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels—go
gaze on them!
Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer
still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
"You are open-hearted, ay—moist-handed, a very prince.
Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple
gift!
My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife
prompts 'Fool,

Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder, since
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on Him
shows thrift.'"

Said Hóseyn "God gives each man one life, like a lamp,
then gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted—hold high,
wave wide
Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what
help is left?
The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Mu-
léykeh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh died?
It is life against life: what good avails to the life-
bereft?"

Another year, and—hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the
trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night
combines
With the robber—and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to
crime,
Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl, by whatever
the wrench.

"He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring dew?
Account the fault to me who chaffered with such an one!
He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode: nay, more—
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:
I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and son.

"I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die:
Let him die, then,—let me live! Be bold—but not too rash!
I have found me a peeping-place: breast, bury your breathing while
I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not, the spy!

"As he said—there lies in peace Hóseyn—how happy! Beside
Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her headstall about his wrist:

'T is therefore he sleeps so sound—the moon through the roof reveals.
And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and wide,
Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunderous heels.

"No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case some thief
Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.
What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both escape."
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl,—so a serpent disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through,
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as before,

He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert like
bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though
the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute
more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth
we know!

And Hóseyn—his blood turns flame, he has learned long
since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part,—they gain—they are gaining
fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross
and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán,—no safety till that be
spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length off
at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch
of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the
strange and queer:
Buhéyseh is mad with hope—beat sister she shall and
must

Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail—they are neck by croup—joy! fear!
What folly makes Hóseyn shout "Dog Duhl, Damned son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl's left flank!"

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and evanished for evermore.
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may:
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the ground
Weeping: and neighbours came, the tribesmen of Bénu-Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his grief;

And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad!
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor Hóseyn is crazed past hope!
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite?
To have simply held the tongue were a task for a boy or girl,
And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by night!"—
"And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn: "You never have loved my Pearl."

PIETRO OF ABANO.

Petrus Aponensis—there was a magician!
When that strange adventure happened, which I mean
to tell my hearers,
Nearly had he tried all trades—beside physician,
Architect, astronomer, astrologer,—or worse:
How else, as the old books warrant, was he able,
All at once, through all the world, to prove the promptest
of appearers
Where was prince to cure, tower to build as high as
Babel,
Star to name or sky-sign read,—yet pouch, for pains, a
curse?

—Curse: for when a vagrant,—foot-sore, travel-tattered,
Now a young man, now an old man, Turk or Arab, Jew
or Gipsy,—
Proffered folk in passing—O for pay, what mattered?—
"I 'll be doctor, I 'll play builder, star I 'll name-sign
read!"

Soon as prince was cured, tower built, and fate predicted,
"Who may you be?" came the question, when he answered "*Petrus ipse*,"
"Just as we divined!" cried folk—"A wretch convicted
Long ago of dealing with the devil—you indeed!"

So, they cursed him roundly, all his labour's payment,
Motioned him—the convalescent prince would—to vacate the presence:
Babylonians plucked his beard and tore his raiment,
Drove him from that tower he built: while, had he peered at stars,
Town howled "Stone the quack who styles our Dog-star —Sirius!"
Country yelled "Aroint the churl who prophesies we take no pleasance
Under vine and fig-tree, since the year 's delirious,
Bears no crop of any kind,—all through the planet Mars!"

Straightway would the whilom youngster grow a grisard,
Or, as case might hap, the hoary eld drop off and show a stripling.
Town and country groaned—indebted to a wizard!

"Curse—nay, kick and cuff him—fit requital of his pains!
Gratitude in word or deed were wasted truly!
Rather make the Church amends by crying out on,
cramping, crippling
One who, on pretence of serving man, serves duly
Man's arch foe: not ours, be sure, but Satan's—his the
gains!"

Peter grinned and bore it, such disgraceful usage:
Somehow, cuffs and kicks and curses seem ordained his
like to suffer:
Prophet's pay with Christians, now as in the Jews' age,
Still is—stoning: so, he meekly took his wage and went,
—Safe again was found ensconced in those old quarters,
Padua's blackest blindest by-street,—none the worse,
nay, somewhat tougher:
"Calculating," quoth he, "soon I join the martyrs,
Since, who magnify my lore on burning me are bent."*

* "Studiando le mie cifre col compasso,
Rilevo che sarò presto sotterra,
Perchè del mio saper si fa gran chiasso,
E gl' ignoranti m' hanno mosso guerra."

Said to have been found in a well at Abano in the last century. They were extemporaneously Englished thus: not as Father Prout chose to prefer them:—

Studying my ciphers with the compass,
I reckon—I soon shall be below-ground;
Because of my lore folk make great rumpus,
And war on myself makes each dull rogue round.

Therefore, on a certain evening, to his alley
Peter slunk, all bruised and broken, sore in body, sick in spirit,
Just escaped from Cairo where he launched a galley
Needing neither sails nor oars nor help of wind or tide,
—Needing but the fume of fire to set a-flying
Wheels like mad which whirled you quick—North, South, where'er you pleased require it,—
That is—would have done so had not priests come prying,
Broke his engine up and bastinadoed him beside.

As he reached his lodging, stopped there unmolested,
(Neighbours feared him, urchins fled him, few were bold enough to follow)
While his fumbling fingers tried the lock and tested
Once again the queer key's virtue, oped the sullen door,—
Someone plucked his sleeve, cried "Master, pray your pardon!
Grant a word to me who patient wait you in your archway's hollow!
Hard on you men's hearts are: be not your heart hard on
Me who kiss your garment's hem, O Lord of magic lore!

"Mage—say I, who no less, scorning tittle-tattle,

To the vulgar give no credence when they prate of Peter's
magic,
Deem his art brews tempest, hurts the crops and cattle,
Hinders fowls from laying eggs and worms from spinning
silk,
Rides upon a he-goat, mounts at need a broomstick:
While the price he pays for this (so turns to comic what
was tragic)
Is—he may not drink—dreads like the Day of Doom's
tick—
One poor drop of sustenance ordained mere men—that 's
milk!

"Tell such tales to Padua! Think me no such dullard!
Not from these benighted parts did I derive my breath
and being!
I am from a land whose cloudless skies are coloured
Livelier, suns orb largelier, airs seem incense,—while,
on earth—
What, instead of grass, our fingers and our thumbs cull,
Proves true moly! sounds and sights there help the
body's hearing, seeing,
Till the soul grows godlike: brief,—you front no numbscull
Shaming by ineptitude the Greece that gave him birth!

"Mark within my eye its iris mystic-lettered—

That 's my name! and note my ear—its swan-shaped
cavity, my emblem!
Mine 's the swan-like nature born to fly unfettered
Over land and sea in search of knowledge—food for
song.
Art denied the vulgar! Geese grow fat on barley,
Swans require ethereal provend, undesirous to resemble
'em—
Soar to seek Apollo,—favoured with a parley
Such as, Master, you grant me—who will not hold you
long.

"Leave to learn to sing—for that your swan petitions:
Master, who possess the secret, say not nay to such a
suitor!
All I ask is—bless mine, purest of ambitions!
Grant me leave to make my kind wise, free, and happy!
How?
Just by making me—as you are mine—their model!
Geese have goose-thoughts: make a swan their teacher
first, then co-adjutor,—
Let him introduce swan-notions to each noddle,—
Geese will soon grow swans, and men become what I am
now!

"That 's the only magic—had but fools discernment,

Could they probe and pass into the solid through the soft and seeming!
Teach me such true magic—now and no adjournment!
Teach your art of making fools subserve the man of mind!
Magic is the power we men of mind should practise,
Draw fools to become our drudges, docile henceforth, never dreaming—
While they do our hests for fancied gain—the fact is
What they toil and moil to get proves falsehood: truth 's behind!

"See now! you conceive some fabric—say, a mansion
Meet for monarch's pride and pleasure: this is truth—a thought has fired you,
Made you fain to give some cramped concept expansion,
Put your faculty to proof, fulfil your nature's task.
First you fascinate the monarch's self: he fancies
He it was devised the scheme you execute as he inspired you:
He in turn sets slaving insignificances
Toiling, moiling till your structure stands there—all you ask!

"Soon the monarch 's known for what he was—a ninny:

Soon the rabble-rout leave labour, take their work-day
wage and vanish:
Soon the late puffed bladder, pricked, shows lank and
skinny—
'Who was its inflator?' ask we, 'whose the giant lungs?'
Petri en pulmones! What though men prove ingrates?
Let them—so they stop at crucifixion—buffet, ban and
banish!
Peter's power 's apparent: human praise—its din grates
Harsh as blame on ear unused to aught save angels'
tongues.

"Ay, there have been always, since our world existed,
Mages who possessed the secret—needed but to stand
still, fix eye
On the foolish mortal: straight was he enlisted
Soldier, scholar, servant, slave—no matter for the style!
Only through illusion; ever what seemed profit—
Love or lucre—justified obedience to the *Ipse dixi:*
Work done—palace reared from pavement up to soffit—
Was it strange if builders smelt out cheating all the
while?

"Let them pelt and pound, bruise, bray you in a mortar!
What 's the odds to you who seek reward of quite another
nature?

You 've enrolled your name where sages of your sort are,
—Michael of Constantinople, Hans of Halberstadt!
Nay and were you nameless, still you 've your conviction
You it was and only you—what signifies the nomenclature?—
Ruled the world in fact, though how you ruled be fiction
Fit for fools: true wisdom's magic you—if e'er man—had 't!

" But perhaps you ask me ' Since each ignoramus
While he profits by such magic persecutes the benefactor,
What should I expect but—once I render famous
You as Michael, Hans and Peter—just one ingrate more?
If the vulgar prove thus, whatsoe'er the pelf be,
Pouched through my beneficence—and doom me dungeoned, chained, or racked, or
Fairly burned outright—how grateful will yourself be
When, his secret gained, you match your—master just before?'

" That 's where I await you! Please, revert a little!

What do folk report about you if not this—which, though chimeric,
Still, as figurative, suits you to a tittle—
That,—although the elements obey your nod and wink,
Fades or flowers the herb you chance to smile or sigh at,
While your frown bids earth quake palled by obscuration atmospheric,—
Brief, although through nature nought resists your *fiat*,
There 's yet one poor substance mocks you—milk you may not drink!

" Figurative language! Take my explanation!
Fame with fear, and hate with homage, these your art procures in plenty.
All 's but daily dry bread: what makes moist the ration?
Love, the milk that sweetens man his meal—alas, you lack:
I am he who, since he fears you not, can love you.
Love is born of heart not mind, *de corde natus haud de mente*;
Touch my heart and love 's yours, sure as shines above you
Sun by day and star by night though earth should go to wrack!

" Stage by stage you lift me—kiss by kiss I hallow

Whose but your dear hand my helper, punctual as at each new impulse
I approach my aim? Shell chipped, the eaglet callow
Needs a parent's pinion-push to quit the eyrie's edge:
But once fairly launched forth, denizen of æther,
While each effort sunward bids the blood more freely through each limb pulse,
Sure the parent feels, as gay they soar together,
Fully are all pains repaid when love redeems its pledge!"

Then did Peter's tristful visage lighten somewhat,
Vent a watery smile as though inveterate mistrust were thawing.
"Well, who knows?" he slow broke silence. "Mortals —come what
Come there may—are still the dupes of hope there 's luck in store.
Many scholars seek me, promise mounts and marvels:
Here stand I to witness how they step 'twixt me and clapperclawing!
Dry bread,—that I 've gained me: truly I should starve else:
But of milk, no drop was mine! Well, shuffle cards once more!"

At the word of promise thus implied, our stranger—

What can he but cast his arms, in rapture of embrace,
round Peter?
"Hold! I choke!" the mage grunts. "Shall I in the
manger
Any longer play the dog? Approach, my calf, and feed!
Bene . . . won't you wait for grace?" But sudden
incense
Wool-white, serpent-solid, curled up—perfume growing
sweet and sweeter
Till it reached the young man's nose and seemed to win
sense
Soul and all from out his brain through nostril: yes,
indeed!

Presently the young man rubbed his eyes. "Where am I?
Too much bother over books! Some reverie has proved
amusing.
What did Peter prate of? 'Faith, my brow is clammy!
How my head throbs, how my heart thumps! Can it
be I swooned?
Oh, I spoke my speech out—cribbed from Plato's
tractate,
Dosed him with 'the Fair and Good,' swore—Dog of
Egypt—I was choosing
Plato's way to serve men! What's the hour? Exact
eight!

Home now, and to-morrow never mind how Plato mooned!

"Peter has the secret! Fair and Good are products
(So he said) of Foul and Evil: one must bring to pass the other.
Just as poisons grow drugs, steal through sundry odd ducts
Doctors name, and ultimately issue safe and changed.
You 'd abolish poisons, treat disease with dainties
Such as suit the sound and sane? With all such kickshaws vain you pother!
Arsenic 's the stuff puts force into the faint eyes,
Opium sets the brain to rights—by cark and care deranged.

"What, he 's safe within door?—would escape—no question—
Thanks, since thanks and more I owe, and mean to pay in time befitting.
What most presses now is—after night's digestion,
Peter, of thy precepts!—promptest practice of the same.
Let me see! The wise man, first of all, scorns riches:
But to scorn them must obtain them: none believes in his permitting
Gold to lie ungathered: who picks up, then pitches
Gold away—philosophizes: none disputes his claim.

"So with worldly honours: 't is by abdicating,
Incontestably he proves he could have kept the crown discarded.
Sulla cuts a figure, leaving off dictating:
Simpletons laud private life? 'The grapes are sour,' laugh we.
So, again—but why continue? All 's tumultuous
Here: my head 's a-whirl with knowledge. Speedily shall be rewarded
He who taught me! Greeks prove ingrates? So insult you us?
When your teaching bears its first-fruits, Peter—wait and see!"

As the word, the deed proved; ere a brief year's passage,
Fop—that fool he made the jokes on—now he made the jokes for, *gratis:*
Hunks—that hoarder, long left lonely in his crass age—
Found now one appreciative deferential friend:
Powder paint-and-patch, Hag Jezebel—recovered,
Strange to say, the power to please, got courtship till she cried *Jam satis!*
Fop be-flattered, Hunks be-friended, Hag be-lovered—
Nobody o'erlooked, save God—he soon attained his end.

As he lounged at ease one morning in his villa,
(Hag's the dowry) estimated (Hunks' bequest) his coin in coffer,
Mused on how a fool's good word (Fop's word) could fill a
Social circle with his praise, promote him man of mark,—
All at once—"An old friend fain would see your Highness!"
There stood Peter, skeleton and scarecrow, plain writ *Phi-lo-so-pher*
In the woe-worn face—for yellowness and dryness,
Parchment—with a pair of eyes—one hope their feeble spark.

"Did I counsel rightly? Have you, in accordance,
Prospered greatly, dear my pupil? Sure, at just the stage I find you,
When your hand may draw me forth from the mad war-dance
Savages are leading round your master—down, not dead.
Padua wants to burn me: baulk them, let me linger
Life out—rueful though its remnant—hid in some safe hole behind you!
Prostrate here I lie: quick, help with but a finger
Lest I house in safety's self—a tombstone o'er my head!

"Lodging, bite and sup, with—now and then—a copper

—Alms for any poorer still, if such there be,—is all my asking.
Take me for your bedesman,—nay, if you think proper,
Menial merely,—such my perfect passion for repose!
Yes, from out your plenty Peter craves a pittance
—Leave to thaw his frozen hands before the fire whereat you 're basking!
Double though your debt were, grant this boon—remittance
He proclaims of obligation: 't is himself that owes!"

"Venerated Master—can it be, such treatment
Learning meets with, magic fails to guard you from, by all appearance?
Strange! for, as you entered,—what the famous feat meant,
I was full of,—why you reared that fabric, Padua's boast.
Nowise for man's pride, man's pleasure, did you slyly
Raise it, but man's seat of rule whereby the world should soon have clearance
(Happy world) from such a rout as now so vilely
Handles you—and hampers me, for which I grieve the most.

"Since if it got wind you now were my familiar,

How could I protect you—nay, defend myself against the rabble?
Wait until the mob, now masters, willy-nilly are
Servants as they should be: then has gratitude full play!
Surely this experience shows how unbefitting
'T is that minds like mine should rot in ease and plenty. Geese may gabble,
Gorge, and keep the ground: but swans are soon for quitting
Earthly fare—as fain would I, your swan, if taught the way.

"Teach me, then, to rule men, have them at my pleasure!
Solely for their good, of course,—impart a secret worth rewarding,
Since the proper life's-prize! Tantalus's treasure
Aught beside proves, vanishes and leaves no trace at all.
Wait awhile, nor press for payment prematurely!
Over-haste defrauds you. Thanks! since,—even while I speak,—discarding
Sloth and vain delights, I learn how—swiftly, surely—
Magic sways the sceptre, wears the crown and wield the ball!

"Gone again—what, is he? 'Faith, he 's soon disposed of!

Peter's precepts work already, put within my lump their leaven!
Ay, we needs must don glove would we pluck the rose—doff
Silken garment would we climb the tree and take its fruit.
Why sharp thorn, rough rind? To keep unviolated
Either prize! We garland us, we mount from earth to feast in heaven,
Just because exist what once we estimated
Hindrances which, better taught, as helps we now compute.

"Foolishly I turned disgusted from my fellows!
Pits of ignorance—to fill, and heaps of prejudice—to level—
Multitudes in motley, whites and blacks and yellows—
What a hopeless task it seemed to discipline the host!
Now I see my error. Vices act like virtues
—Not alone because they guard—sharp thorns—the rose we first dishevel,
Not because they scrape, scratch—rough rind—through the dirt-shoes
Bare feet cling to bole with, while the half-mooned boot we boast.

"No, my aim is nobler, more disinterested!

Man shall keep what seemed to thwart him, since it
proves his true assistance,
Leads to ascertaining which head is the best head,
Would he crown his body, rule its members—lawless else.
Ignorant the horse stares, by deficient vision
Takes a man to be a monster, lets him mount, then, twice
the distance
Horse could trot unridden, gallops—dream Elysian!—
Dreaming that his dwarfish guide 's a giant,—jockeys
tell 's."

Brief, so worked the spell, he promptly had a riddance:
Heart and brain no longer felt the pricks which passed
for conscience-scruples:
Free henceforth his feet,—*Per Bacco*, how they did
dance
Merrily through lets and checks that stopped the way
before!
Politics the prize now,—such adroit adviser,
Opportune suggester, with the tact that triples and
quadruples
Merit in each measure,—never did the Kaiser
Boast a subject such a statesman, friend, and something
more!

As he, up and down, one noonday, paced his closet

—Council o'er, each spark (his hint) blown flame, by
colleagues' breath applauded,
Strokes of statecraft hailed with "*Salomo si nôsset!*"
(His the nostrum)—every throw for luck come double-
six,—
As he, pacing, hugged himself in satisfaction,
Thump—the door went. "What, the Kaiser? By none
else were I defrauded
Thus of well-earned solace. Since 't is fate's exaction,—
Enter, Liege my Lord! Ha, Peter, you here? *Teneor
vix!*"

"Ah, Sir, none the less, contain you, nor wax irate!
You so lofty, I so lowly,—vast the space which yawns
between us!
Still, methinks, you—more than ever—at a high rate
Needs must prize poor Peter's secret since it lifts you thus.
Grant me now the boon whereat before you boggled!
Ten long years your march has moved—one triumph—
(though *e* 's short)—*hactēnus*,
While I down and down disastrously have joggled
Till I pitch against Death's door, the true *Nec Ultra Plus*.

"Years ago—some ten 't is—since I sought for shelter,
Craved in your whole house a closet, out of all your
means a comfort.

Now you soar above these: as is gold to spelter
So is power—you urged with reason—paramount to wealth.
Power you boast in plenty: let it grant me refuge!
Houseroom now is out of question: find for me some stronghold—some fort—
Privacy wherein, immured, shall this blind deaf huge
Monster of a mob let stay the soul I 'd save by stealth!

"Ay, for all too much with magic have I tampered!
—Lost the world, and gained, I fear, a certain place I 'm to describe loth!
Still, if prayer and fasting tame the pride long pampered,
Mercy may be mine: amendment never comes too late.
How can I amend beset by cursers, kickers?
Pluck this brand from out the burning! Once away, I take my Bible-oath,
Never more—so long as life's weak lamp-flame flickers—
No, not once I 'll tease you, but in silence bear my fate!"

"Gently, good my Genius, Oracle unerring!
Strange now! can you guess on what—as in you peeped—it was I pondered?
You and I are both of one mind in preferring
Power to wealth, but—here 's the point—what sort of power, I ask?

Ruling men is vulgar, easy and ignoble:
Rid yourself of conscience, quick you have at beck and call the fond herd.
But who wields the crozier, down may fling the crow-bill:
That 's the power I covet now; soul 's sway o'er souls—my task!

"'Well but,' you object, 'you have it, who by glamour
Dress up lies to look like truths, mask folly in the garb of reason:
Your soul acts on theirs, sure, when the people clamour
Hold their peace, now fight now fondle,—earwigged through the brains.'
Possibly! but still the operation 's mundane,
Grosser than a taste demands which—craving manna—kecks at peason—
Power o'er men by wants material: why should one deign
Rule by sordid hopes and fears—a grunt for all one's pains?

"No, if men must praise me, let them praise to purpose!
Would we move the world, not earth but heaven must be our fulcrum—*pou sto!*
Thus I seek to move it: Master, why intérpose—
Baulk my climbing close on what 's the ladder's topmost round?

Statecraft 't is I step from: when by priestcraft hoisted
Up to where my foot may touch the highest rung which fate allows toe,
Then indeed ask favour! On you shall be foisted
No excuse: I 'll pay my debt, each penny of the pound!

"Ho, my knaves without there! Lead this worthy downstairs!
No farewell, good Paul—nay, Peter—what 's your name remembered rightly?
Come, he 's humble: out another would have flounced—airs
Suitors often give themselves when our sort bow them forth.
Did I touch his rags? He surely kept his distance:
Yet, there somehow passed to me from him—where'er the virtue might lie—
Something that inspires my soul—Oh, by assistance
Doubtlessly of Peter!—still, he 's worth just what he 's worth!

"'T is my own soul soars now: soaring—how? By crawling!
I 'll to Rome, before Rome's feet the temporal-supreme lay prostrate!
'Hands' (I 'll say) 'proficient once in pulling, hauling

This and that way men as I was minded—feet now
clasp!'
Ay, the Kaiser's self has wrung them in his fervour!
Now—they only sue to slave for Rome, nor at one doit
the cost rate.
Rome's adopted child—no bone, no muscle, nerve or
Sinew of me but I'll strain, though out my life I gasp!"

As he stood one evening proudly—(he had traversed
Rome on horseback—peerless pageant!—claimed the
Lateran as new Pope)—
Thinking "All's attained now! Pontiff! Who could
have erst
Dreamed of my advance so far when, some ten years
ago,
I embraced devotion, grew from priest to bishop,
Gained the Purple, bribed the Conclave, got the Two-
thirds, saw my coop ope,
Came out—what Rome hails me! O were there a wish-
shop,
Not one wish more would I purchase—lord of all below!

"Ha!—who dares intrude now—puts aside the arras?
What, old Peter, here again, at such a time, in such a
presence?
Satan sends this plague back merely to embarrass

Me who enter on my office—little needing you!
'Faith, I 'm touched myself by age, but you look Tithon!
Were it vain to seek of you the sole prize left—rejuvenescence?
Well, since flesh is grass which Time must lay his scythe on,
Say your say and so depart and make no more ado!"

Peter faltered—coughing first by way of prologue—
"Holiness, your help comes late: a death at ninety little matters.
Padua, build poor Peter's pyre now, on log roll log,
Burn away—I 've lived my day! Yet here 's the sting in death—
I 've an author's pride: I want my Book's survival:
See, I 've hid it in my breast to warm me mid the rags and tatters!
Save it—tell next age your Master had no rival!
Scholar's debt discharged in full, be 'Thanks' my latest breath!"

"Faugh, the frowsy bundle—scribblings harum-scarum
Scattered o'er a dozen sheepskins! What 's the name of this farrago?
Ha—'*Conciliator Differentiarum*'—

Man and book may burn together, cause the world no loss!
Stop—what else? A tractate—eh, '*De Speciebus Ceremonialis Ma-gi-æ?*' I dream sure! Hence, away, go,
Wizard,—quick avoid me! Vain you clasp my knee, buss
Hand that bears the Fisher's ring or foot that boasts the Cross!

"Help! The old magician clings like an octopus!
Ah, you rise now—fuming, fretting, frowning, if I read your features!
Frown, who cares? We 're Pope—once Pope, you can't unpope us!
Good—you muster up a smile: that 's better! Still so brisk?
All at once grown youthful? But the case is plain! Ass—
Here I dally with the fiend, yet know the Word—compels all creatures
Earthly, heavenly, hellish. *Apage, Sathanas*
Dicam verbum Salomonis—" "*—dicite!*" When—whisk!—

What was changed? The stranger gave his eyes a rubbing:

There smiled Peter's face turned back a moment at him
o'er the shoulder,
As the black door shut, bang! "So he 'scapes a
drubbing!"
(Quoth a boy who, unespied, had stopped to hear the
talk).
"That 's the way to thank these wizards when they bid
men
Benedicite! What ails you? You, a man, and yet no
bolder?
Foreign Sir, you look but foolish!" "*Idmen, idmen!*"
Groaned the Greek. "O Peter, cheese at last I know
from chalk!"

Peter lived his life out, menaced yet no martyr,
Knew himself the mighty man he was—such knowledge
all his guerdon,
Left the world a big book—people but in part err
When they style a true *Scientiæ Com-pen-di-um:*
"*Admirationem incutit*" they sourly
Smile, as fast they shut the folio which myself was some-
how spurred on
Once to ope: but love — life's milk which daily,
hourly,
Blockheads lap—O Peter, still thy taste of love 's to
come!

Greek, was your ambition likewise doomed to failure?
True, I find no record you wore purple, walked with axe
and fasces,
Played some antipope's part: still, friend, don't turn tail,
you 're
Certain, with but these two gifts, to gain earth's prize in
time!
Cleverness uncurbed by conscience—if you ransacked
Peter's book you 'd find no potent spell like these to rule
the masses;
Nor should want example, had I not to transact
Other business. Go your ways, you 'll thrive! So ends
my rhyme.

When these parts Tiberius,—not yet Cæsar,—travelled,
Passing Padua, he consulted Padua's Oracle of Geryon
(God three-headed, thrice wise) just to get unravelled
Certain tangles of his future. "Fling at Abano
Golden dice," it answered: "dropt within the fount there,
Note what sum the pips present!" And still we see
each die, the very one,
Turn up, through the crystal,—read the whole account
there
Where 't is told by Suetonius,—each its highest throw.

Scarce the sportive fancy-dice I fling show "Venus:"
Still—for love of that dear land which I so oft in dreams
revisit—
I have—oh, not sung! but lilted (as—between us—
Grows my lazy custom) this its legend. What the lilt?

DOCTOR ——

A Rabbi told me: On the day allowed
Satan for carping at God's rule, he came,
Fresh from our earth, to brave the angel-crowd.

"What is the fault now?" "This I find to blame:
Many and various are the tongues below,
Yet all agree in one speech, all proclaim

"'Hell has no might to match what earth can show:
Death is the strongest-born of Hell, and yet
Stronger than Death is a Bad Wife, we know.'

"Is it a wonder if I fume and fret—
Robbed of my rights, since Death am I, and mine
The style of Strongest? Men pay Nature's debt

"Because they must at my demand; decline
To pay it henceforth surely men will please,
Provided husbands with bad wives combine

"To baffle Death. Judge between me and these!"
"Thyself shalt judge. Descend to earth in shape
Of mortal, marry, drain from froth to lees

"The bitter draught, then see if thou escape
Concluding, with men sorrowful and sage,
A Bad Wife's strength Death's self in vain would ape!"

How Satan entered on his pilgrimage,
Conformed himself to earthly ordinance,
Wived and played husband well from youth to age

Intrepidly—I leave untold, advance
Through many a married year until I reach
A day when—of his father's countenance

The very image, like him too in speech
As well as thought and deed,—the union's fruit
Attained maturity. "I needs must teach

"My son a trade: but trade, such son to suit,
Needs seeking after. He a man of war?
Too cowardly! A lawyer wins repute—

"Having to toil and moil, though—both which are
Beyond this sluggard. There 's Divinity:
No, that 's my own bread-winner—that be far

"From my poor offspring! Physic? Ha, we 'll try
If this be practicable. Where 's my wit?
Asleep?—since, now I come to think. . . . Ay, ay!

"Hither, my son! Exactly have I hit
On a profession for thee. *Medicus*—
Behold, thou art appointed! Yea, I spit

"Upon thine eyes, bestow a virtue thus
That henceforth not this human form I wear
Shalt thou perceive alone, but—one of us

"By privilege—thy fleshly sight shall bear
Me in my spirit-person as I walk
The world and take my prey appointed there.

"Doctor once dubbed—what ignorance shall baulk
Thy march triumphant? Diagnose the gout
As cholic, and prescribe it cheese for chalk—

"No matter! All 's one: cure shall come about
And win thee wealth—fees paid with such a roar
Of thanks and praise alike from lord and lout

"As never stunned man's ears on earth before.
'How may this be?' Why, that 's my sceptic! Soon
Truth will corrupt thee, soon thou doubt'st no more!

"Why is it I bestow on thee the boon
Of recognizing me the while I go
Invisibly among men, morning, noon

"And night, from house to house, and—quick or slow—
Take my appointed prey? They summon thee
For help, suppose: obey the summons! so!

"Enter, look round! Where 's Death? Know—I am he,
Satan who work all evil: I who bring
Pain to the patient in whate'er degree.

"I, then, am there: first glance thine eye shall fling
Will find me—whether distant or at hand,
As I am free to do my spiriting.

"At such mere first glance thou shalt understand
Wherefore I reach no higher up the room
Than door or window, when my form is scanned.

"Howe'er friends' faces please to gather gloom,
Bent o'er the sick,—howe'er himself desponds,—
In such case Death is not the sufferer's doom.

"Contrariwise, do friends rejoice my bonds
Are broken, does the captive in his turn
Crow 'Life shall conquer'? Nip these foolish fronds

"Of hope a-sprout, if haply thou discern
Me at the head—my victim's head, be sure!
Forth now! This taught thee, little else to learn!"

And forth he went. Folk heard him ask demure
"How do you style this ailment? (There he peeps,
My father, through the arras!) Sirs, the cure

"Is plain as A. B. C.! Experience steeps
Blossoms of pennyroyal half an hour
In sherris. *Sumat!*—Lo, how sound he sleeps—

"The subject you presumed was past the power
Of Galen to relieve!" Or else "How 's this?
Why call for help so tardily? Clouds lour

"Portentously indeed, Sirs! (Nought 's amiss:
He 's at the bed-foot merely.) Still, the storm
May pass averted—not by quacks, I wis

"Like you, my masters! You, forsooth, perform
A miracle? Stand, sciolists, aside!
Blood, ne'er so cold, at ignorance grows warm!"

Which boasting by result was justified,
Big as might words be: whether drugged or left
Drugless, the patient always lived, not died.

Great the heir's gratitude, so nigh bereft
Of all he prized in this world: sweet the smile
Of disconcerted rivals: "Cure?—say, theft

"From Nature in despite of Art—so style
This off-hand kill-or-cure work! You did much,
I had done more: folk cannot wait awhile!"

But did the case change? was it—"Scarcely such
The symptoms as to warrant our recourse
To your skill, Doctor! Yet since just a touch

"Of pulse, a taste of breath, has all the force
With you of long investigation claimed
By others,—tracks an ailment to its source

"Intuitively,—may we ask unblamed
What from this pimple you prognosticate?"
"Death!" was the answer, as he saw and named

The coucher by the sick man's head. "Too late
You send for my assistance. I am bold
Only by Nature's leave, and bow to Fate!

"Besides, you have my rivals: lavish gold!
How comfortably quick shall life depart
Cosseted by attentions manifold!

"One day, one hour ago, perchance my art
Had done some service. Since you have yourselves
Chosen—before the horse—to put the cart,

"Why, Sirs, the sooner that the sexton delves
Your patient's grave, the better! How you stare
—Shallow, for all the deep books on your shelves!

"Fare you well, fumblers!" Do I need declare
What name and fame, what riches recompensed
The Doctor's practice? Never anywhere

Such an adept as daily evidenced
Each new vaticination! Oh, not he
Like dolts who dallied with their scruples, fenced

With subterfuge, nor gave out frank and free
Something decisive! If he said "I save
The patient," saved he was: if "Death will be

"His portion," you might count him dead. Thus brave,
Behold our worthy, sans competitor
Throughout the country, on the architrave

Of Glory's temple golden-lettered for
Machaon *redivivus*! So, it fell
That, of a sudden, when the Emperor

Was smit by sore disease, I need not tell
If any other Doctor's aid was sought
To come and forthwith make the sick Prince well.

"He will reward thee as a monarch ought.
Not much imports the malady; but then,
He clings to life and cries like one distraught

"For thee—who, from a simple citizen,
Mayst look to rise in rank,—nay, haply wear
A medal with his portrait,—always when

"Recovery is quite accomplished. There!
Pass to the presence!" Hardly has he crossed
The chamber's threshold when he halts, aware

Of who stands sentry by the head. All 's lost.
"Sire, nought avails my art: you near the goal,
And end the race by giving up the ghost."

"How?" cried the monarch: "Names upon your roll
Of half my subjects rescued by your skill—
Old and young, rich and poor—crowd cheek by jowl

"And yet no room for mine? Be saved I will!
Why else am I earth's foremost potentate?
Add me to these and take as fee your fill

"Of gold—that point admits of no debate
Between us: save me, as you can and must,—
Gold, till your gown's pouch cracks beneath the weight!"

This touched the Doctor. "Truly a home-thrust,
Parent, you will not parry! Have I dared
Entreat that you forego the meal of dust

"—Man that is snake's meat—when I saw prepared
Your daily portion? Never! Just this once,
Go from his head, then,—let his life be spared!"

Whisper met whisper in the gruff response
"Fool, I must have my prey: no inch I budge
From where thou see'st me thus myself ensconce."

"Ah," moaned the sufferer, "by thy look I judge
Wealth fails to tempt thee: what if honours prove
More efficacious? Nought to him I grudge

"Who saves me. Only keep my head above
The cloud that 's creeping round it—I 'll divide
My empire with thee! No? What 's left but—love?

"Does love allure thee? Well then, take as bride
My only daughter, fair beyond belief!
Save me—to-morrow shall the knot be tied!"

"Father, you hear him! Respite ne'er so brief
Is all I beg: go now and come again
Next day, for aught I care: respect the grief

"Mine will be if thy first-born sues in vain!"
"Fool, I must have my prey!" was all he got
In answer. But a fancy crossed his brain.

"I have it! Sire, methinks a meteor shot
Just now across the heavens and neutralized
Jove's salutary influence: 'neath the blot

"Plumb are you placed now: well that I surmised
The cause of failure! Knaves, reverse the bed!"
"Stay!" groaned the monarch, "I shall be capsized—

"Jolt—jolt—my heels uplift where late my head
Was lying—sure I 'm turned right round at last!
What do you say now, Doctor?" Nought he said:

For why? With one brisk leap the Antic passed
From couch-foot back to pillow,—as before,
Lord of the situation. Long aghast

The Doctor gazed, then "Yet one trial more
Is left me" inwardly he uttered "Shame
Upon thy flinty heart! Do I implore

"This trifling favour in the idle name
Of mercy to the moribund? I plead
The cause of all thou dost affect: my aim

"Befits my author! Why would I succeed?
Simply that by success I may promote
The growth of thy pet virtues—pride and greed.

"But keep thy favours!—curse thee! I devote
Henceforth my service to the other side.
No time to lose: the rattle 's in his throat.

"So,—not to leave one last resource untried,—
Run to my house with all haste, somebody!
Bring me that knobstick thence, so often plied

"With profit by the astrologer—shall I
Disdain its help, the mystic Jacob's-Staff?
Sire, do but have the courage not to die

"Till this arrive! Let none of you dare laugh!
Though rugged its exterior, I have seen
That implement work wonders, send the chaff

"Quick and thick flying from the wheat—I mean,
By metaphor, a human sheaf it thrashed
Flail-like. Go fetch it! Or—a word between

"Just you and me, friend!—go bid, unabashed,
My mother, whom you 'll find there, bring the stick
Herself—herself, mind!" Out the lackey dashed

Zealous upon the errand. Craft and trick
Are meat and drink to Satan: and he grinned
—How else?—at an excuse so politic

For failure: scarce would Jacob's-Staff rescind
Fate's firm decree! And ever as he neared
The agonizing one, his breath like wind

Froze to the marrow, while his eye-flash seared
Sense in the brain up: closelier and more close
Pressing his prey, when at the door appeared

—Who but his Wife the Bad? Whereof one dose,
One grain, one mite of the medicament,
Sufficed him. Up he sprang. One word, too gross

To soil my lips with,—and through ceiling went
Somehow the Husband. "That a storm 's dispersed
We know for certain by the sulphury scent!

"Hail to the Doctor! Who but one so versed
In all Dame Nature's secrets had prescribed
The staff thus opportunely? Style him first

"And foremost of physicians!" "I 've imbibed
Elixir surely," smiled the prince,—"have gained
New lease of life. Dear Doctor, how you bribed

"Death to forego me, boots not: you 've obtained
My daughter and her dowry. Death, I 've heard,
Was still on earth the strongest power that reigned,

"Except a Bad Wife!" Whereunto demurred
Nowise the Doctor, so refused the fee
—No dowry, no bad wife!

"You think absurd
This tale?"—the Rabbi added: "True, our Talmud
Boasts sundry such: yet—have our elders erred
In thinking there 's some water there, not all mud?"
I tell it, as the Rabbi told it me.

PAN AND LUNA.

Si credere dignum est.—*Georgic.* iii. 390.

O WORTHY of belief I hold it was,
Virgil, your legend in those strange three lines!
No question, that adventure came to pass
One black night in Arcadia: yes, the pines,
Mountains and valleys mingling made one mass
Of black with void black heaven: the earth's confines,
The sky's embrace,—below, above, around,
All hardened into black without a bound.

Fill up a swart stone chalice to the brim
With fresh-squeezed yet fast-thickening poppy-juice:
See how the sluggish jelly, late a-swim,
Turns marble to the touch of who would loose
The solid smooth, grown jet from rim to rim,
By turning round the bowl! So night can fuse
Earth with her all-comprising sky. No less,
Light, the least spark, shows air and emptiness.

And thus it proved when—diving into space,
Stript of all vapour, from each web of mist
Utterly film-free—entered on her race
The naked Moon, full-orbed antagonist
Of night and dark, night's dowry: peak to base,
Upstarted mountains, and each valley, kissed
To sudden life, lay silver-bright: in air
Flew she revealed, Maid-Moon with limbs all bare.

Still as she fled, each depth—where refuge seemed—
Opening a lone pale chamber, left distinct
Those limbs: mid still-retreating blue, she teemed
Herself with whiteness,—virginal, uncinct
By any halo save what finely gleamed
To outline not disguise her: heaven was linked
In one accord with earth to quaff the joy,
Drain beauty to the dregs without alloy.

Whereof she grew aware. What help? When, lo,
A succourable cloud with sleep lay dense:
Some pine-tree-top had caught it sailing slow,
And tethered for a prize: in evidence
Captive lay fleece on fleece of piled-up snow
Drowsily patient: flake-heaped how or whence,
The structure of that succourable cloud,
What matter? Shamed she plunged into its shroud.

Orbed—so the woman-figure poets call
Because of rounds on rounds—that apple-shaped
Head which its hair binds close into a ball
Each side the curving ears—that pure undraped
Pout of the sister paps—that . . . Once for all,
Say—her consummate circle thus escaped
With its innumerous circlets, sank absorbed,
Safe in the cloud—O naked Moon full-orbed!

But what means this? The downy swathes combine,
Conglobe, the smothery coy-caressing stuff
Curdles about her! Vain each twist and twine
Those lithe limbs try, encroached on by a fluff
Fitting as close as fits the dented spine
Its flexile ivory outside-flesh: enough!
The plumy drifts contract, condense, constringe,
Till she is swallowed by the feathery springe.

As when a pearl slips lost in the thin foam
Churned on a sea-shore, and, o'er-frothed, conceits
Herself safe-housed in Amphitrite's dome,—
If, through the bladdery wave-worked yeast, she meets
What most she loathes and leaps from,—elf from gnome
No gladlier,—finds that safest of retreats
Bubble about a treacherous hand wide ope
To grasp her—(divers who pick pearls so grope)—

So lay this Maid-Moon clasped around and caught
By rough red Pan, the god of all that tract:
He it was schemed the snare thus subtly wrought
With simulated earth-breath,—wool-tufts packed
Into a billowy wrappage. Sheep far-sought
For spotless shearings yield such: take the fact
As learned Virgil gives it,—how the breed
Whitens itself for ever: yes, indeed!

If one forefather ram, though pure as chalk
From tinge on fleece, should still display a tongue
Black 'neath the beast's moist palate, prompt men baulk
The propagating plague: he gets no young:
They rather slay him,—sell his hide to caulk
Ships with, first steeped in pitch,—nor hands are wrung
In sorrow for his fate: protected thus,
The purity we love is gained for us.

So did Girl-moon, by just her attribute
Of unmatched modesty betrayed, lie trapped,
Bruised to the breast of Pan, half-god half-brute,
Raked by his bristly boar-sward while he lapped
—Never say, kissed her! that were to pollute
Love's language—which moreover proves unapt

To tell how she recoiled—as who finds thorns
Where she sought flowers—when, feeling, she touched
—horns!

Then—does the legend say?—first moon-eclipse
Happened, first swooning-fit which puzzled sore
The early sages? Is that why she dips
Into the dark, a minute and no more,
Only so long as serves her while she rips
The cloud's womb through and, faultless as before,
Pursues her way? No lesson for a maid
Left she, a maid herself thus trapped, betrayed?

Ha, Virgil? Tell the rest, you! "To the deep
Of his domain the wildwood, Pan forthwith
Called her, and so she followed"—in her sleep,
Surely?—"by no means spurning him." The myth
Explain who may! Let all else go, I keep
—As of a ruin just a monolith—
Thus much, one verse of five words, each a boon:
Arcadia, night, a cloud, Pan, and the moon.

"Touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke:
Soil so quick-receptive,—not one feather-seed,
Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
Vitalizing virtue: song would song succeed
Sudden as spontaneous—prove a poet-soul!"

Indeed?

Rock 's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare:
Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
Vainly both expend,—few flowers awaken there:
Quiet in its cleft broods—what the after age
Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.

JOCOSERIA.

WANTING is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

JOCOSERIA.

1883.

DONALD.

"WILL you hear my story also,
—Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty?"
The boys were a band from Oxford,
The oldest of whom was twenty.

The bothy we held carouse in
Was bright with fire and candle;
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round
Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses—turf-smoke:
In our ears a tune from the trivet,
Whence "Boiling, boiling," the kettle sang,
"And ready for fresh Glenlivet."

So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance:
Truths, though,—the lads were loyal:
"Grouse, five score brace to the bag!
Deer, ten hours' stalk of the Royal!"

Of boasting, not one bit, boys!
Only there seemed to settle
Somehow above your curly heads,
—Plain through the singing kettle,

Palpable through the cloud,
As each new-puffed Havanna
Rewarded the teller's well-told tale,—
This vaunt "To Sport—Hosanna!

"Hunt, fish, shoot,
Would a man fulfil life's duty!
Not to the bodily frame alone
Does Sport give strength and beauty,

"But character gains in—courage?
Ay, Sir, and much beside it!
You don't sport, more 's the pity:
You soon would find, if you tried it,

"Good sportsman means good fellow,
Sound-hearted he, to the centre;
Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops
—There's where the rot can enter!

"There's where the dirt will breed,
The shabbiness Sport would banish!
Oh no, Sir, no! In your honoured case
All such objections vanish.

"'T is known how hard you studied:
A Double-First—what, the jigger!
Give me but half your Latin and Greek,
I'll never again touch trigger!

"Still, tastes are tastes, allow me!
Allow, too, where there 's keenness
For Sport, there 's little likelihood
Of a man's displaying meanness!"

So, put on my mettle, I interposed.
"Will you hear my story?" quoth I.
"Never mind how long since it happed,
I sat, as we sit, in a bothy;

"With as merry a band of mates, too,
Undergrads all on a level:
(One's a Bishop, one's gone to the Bench,
And one's gone—well, to the Devil.)

"When, lo, a scratching and tapping!
In hobbled a ghastly visitor.
Listen to just what he told us himself
—No need of our playing inquisitor!"

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
Mount . . . Ben . . . but the name scarce matters:
Of the naked fact I am sure enough,
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognise Ben by description;
Behind him—a moor's immenseness:
Up goes the middle mount of a range,
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind!
For an edge there is, though narrow;
From end to end of the range, a stripe
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
Saves himself miles of journey
He has to plod if he crosses the moor
Through heather, peat and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
For, look you, right in the middle
Projects bluff Ben—with an end in *ich*—
Why planted there, is a riddle:

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
And only this burliest out must bulge
Till it seems—to the beholder

From down in the gully,—as if Ben's breast
To a sudden spike diminished,
Would signify to the boldest foot
"All further passage finished!"

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
And on to the very bending,
Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
Having trod, he, there arriving,
Finds—what he took for a point was breadth,
A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 't is reached, proves straight,
From one side gains the other:
The wee path widens—resume the march,
And he foils you, Ben my brother!

But Donald—(that name, I hope, will do)—
I wrong him if I call "foiling"
The tramp of the callant, whistling the while
As blithe as our kettle 's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up,
And now,—when perchance was waiting
A lass at the brig below,—'twixt mount
And moor would he stand debating?

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
A glory of bone and muscle:
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
On to the narrow and narrow;
A step more, rounding the angular rock,
Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,
When—whom found he full-facing?
What fellow in courage and wariness too,
Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
And made for the dread dear danger,
And gained the height where—who could guess
He would meet with a rival ranger?

'T was a gold-red stag that stood and stared,
Gigantic and magnific,
By the wonder—ay, and the peril—struck
Intelligent and pacific:

For a red deer is no fallow deer
  Grown cowardly through park-feeding;
He batters you like a thunderbolt
  If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
  Had valour advised discretion:
You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope
  No Blondin makes profession.

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,
  Though pride ill brooks retiring:
Each eyed each—mute man, motionless beast—
  Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new sense,
  To meet some need as novel,
Springs up in the brain: it inspired resource:
  —"Nor advance nor retreat but—grovel!"

And slowly, surely, never a whit
  Relaxing the steady tension
Of eye-stare which binds man to beast,—
  By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down :
  Till flat, breast upwards, lying
At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
  —" If he cross me ! The trick 's worth trying."

Minutes were an eternity ;
  But a new sense was created
In the stag's brain too ; he resolves ! Slow, sure,
  With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
  Which tastes the way ere it touches
Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
  Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
  Lands itself no less finely :
So a mother removes a fly from the face
  Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 't is the haunch and hind foot's turn
  —That 's hard : can the beast quite raise it ?
Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
  His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift! But Donald, you see,
Was sportsman first, man after:
A fancy lightened his caution through,
—He well-nigh broke into laughter.

"It were nothing short of a miracle!
Unrivalled, unexampled—
All sporting feats with this feat matched
Were down and dead and trampled!"

The last of the legs as tenderly
Follows the rest: or never
Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
And his right-hand loose—how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
While the left-hand grasps the pastern.
A rise on the elbow, and—now 's the time
Or never: this turn 's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
Who scanned—for He does—each feature
Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him
By the agonizing creature.

Nay, I hear plain words: "Thy gift brings this!"
Up he sprang, back he staggered,
Over he fell, and with him our friend
—At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next day
From the gully's depth the wreck of him;
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him

But the rest of his body—why, doctors said,
Whatever could break was broken;
Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast
In a tumbler of port-wine soaken.

"That your life is left you, thank the stag!"
Said they when—the slow cure ended—
They opened the hospital door, and thence
—Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone,—
Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
Out—what went in a Goliath well-nigh,—
Some half of a David hobbled.

"You must ask an alms from house to house:
Sell the stag's head for a bracket,
With its grand twelve tines—I 'd buy it myself—
And use the skin for a jacket!"

He was wiser, made both head and hide
His win-penny: hands and knees on,
Would manage to crawl—poor crab—by the roads
In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
Why, harvest was sure: folk listened.
He told his tale to the lovers of Sport:
Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and spread
His spoils for the gazers' wonder,
With "Gentlemen, here 's the skull of the stag
I was over, thank God, not under!"—

The company broke out in applause;
"By Jingo, a lucky cripple!
Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,
And a tug, besides, at our tipple!"

And "There 's my pay for your pluck!" cried This,
"And mine for your jolly story!"
Cried That, while 'T other—but he was drunk—
Hiccupped "A trump, a Tory!"

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest;
For, as Homer would say, "within grate
Though teeth kept tongue," my whole soul growled
"Rightly rewarded,—Ingrate!"

SOLOMON AND BALKIS.

Solomon King of the Jews and the Queen of Sheba Balkis
Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may conjecture their talk is
Solely of things sublime: why else has she sought Mount Zion,
Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion and lion?

She proves him with hard questions: before she has reached the middle
He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them riddle by riddle;
Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit in her,
And thus would she close the game whereof she was first beginner:

"O wisest thou of the wise, world's marvel and well-nigh monster,
One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo* conster!
Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of perfect wisdom
Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron do*—that 's his dome?"

The King makes tart reply: "Whom else but the wise his equals
Should he welcome with heart and voice?—since, king though he be, such weak walls
Of circumstance—power and pomp—divide souls each from other
That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must acknowledge my brother.

"Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come builder—whate'er his condition,
Is he prime in his art? We are peers! My insight has pierced the partition
And hails—for the poem, the picture, the statue, the building—my fellow!
Gold 's gold though dim in the dust: court-polish soon turns it yellow.

"But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling sex superior,
That for knowledge hast travelled so far yet seemest no whit the wearier,—
Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like thyself, consummate
In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable 'Up hither, come, mate!'"

"The Good are my mates—how else? Why doubt it?" the Queen upbridled:
"Sure even above the Wise,—or in travel my eyes have idled,—
I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor, shrewd or simple,
If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop my wimple!"

And in that bashful jerk of her body, she—peace, thou scoffer!—
Jostled the King's right-hand stretched courteously help to proffer,
And so disclosed a portent: all unaware the Prince eyed
The Ring which bore the Name—turned outside now from inside!

The truth-compelling Name!—and at once "I greet the
Wise—Oh,
Certainly welcome such to my court—with this proviso:
The building must be my temple, my person stand forth
the statue,
The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my praise—
you cat, you!"

But Solomon nonplussed? Nay! "Be truthful in
turn!" so bade he:
"See the Name, obey its hest!" And at once subjoins
the lady
—"Provided the Good are the young, men strong and
tall and proper,
Such servants I straightway enlist,—which means . . ."
but the blushes stop her.

"Ah, Soul," the Monarch sighed, "that wouldst soar yet
ever crawlest,
How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet choose
the smallest,
Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit expan-
sion,
While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the earthly
mansion?

"Aspire to the Best! But which? There are Bests and Bests so many,
With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much Best as any!
On Lebanon roots the cedar—soil lofty, yet stony and sandy—
While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall grows low but handy.

"Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body and sense beneath her;
Below she must condescend to plodding unbuoyed by æther.
In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else inanity;
On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools—that 's Vanity.

"It is nought, it will go, it can never presume above to trouble me;
But here,—why, it toys and tickles and teases, howe'er I redouble me
In a doggedest of endeavours to play the indifferent. Therefore,
Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast travelled thus far: but wherefore?

"Solely for Solomon's sake, to see whom earth styles
Sagest?"
Through her blushes laughed the Queen. "For the
sake of a Sage? The gay jest!
On high, be communion with Mind—there, Body concerns
not Balkis:
Down here,—do I make too bold? Sage Solomon,—
one fool's small kiss!"

CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI.

Ah, but how each loved each, Marquis!
Here 's the gallery they trod
Both together, he her god,
She his idol,—lend your rod,
Chamberlain!—ay, there they are—"*Quis*
Separabit?"—plain those two
Touching words come into view,
Apposite for me and you:

Since they witness to incessant
Love like ours: King Francis, he—
Diane the adored one, she—
Prototypes of you and me.
Everywhere is carved her Crescent
With his Salamander-sign—
Flame-fed creature: flame benign
To itself or, it malign,

Only to the meddling curious,
—So, be warned, Sir! Where 's my head?
How it wanders! What I said
Merely meant—the creature, fed
Thus on flame, was scarce injurious
Save to fools who woke its ire,
Thinking fit to play with fire.
'Tis the Crescent you admire?

Then, be Diane! I 'll be Francis.
Crescents change,—true!—wax and wane,
Woman-like: male hearts retain
Heat nor, once warm, cool again.
So, we figure—such our chance is—
I as man and you as . . . What?
Take offence? My Love forgot
He plays woman, I do not?

I—the woman? See my habit,
Ask my people! Anyhow,
Be we what we may, one vow
Binds us, male or female. Now,—
Stand, Sir! Read! "*Quis separabit?*"
Half a mile of pictured way
Past these palace-walls to-day
Traversed, this I came to say.

You must needs begin to love me;
First I hated, then, at best,
—Have it so!—I acquiesced;
Pure compassion did the rest.
From below thus raised above me,
Would you, step by step, descend,
Pity me, become my friend,
Like me, like less, loathe at end?

That 's the ladder's round you rose by!
That—my own foot kicked away,
Having raised you: let it stay,
Serve you for retreating? Nay.
Close to me you climbed: as close by,
Keep your station, though the peak
Reached proves somewhat bare and bleak
Woman 's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me forever!
Love's look, gesture, speech, I claim;
Act love, lie love, all the same—
Play as earnest were our game!
Lonely I stood long: 't was clever
When you climbed, before men's eyes,
Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,
Gained my peak and grasped your prize.

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder,
Here you tire of standing? Kneel!
Cure what giddiness you feel,
This way! Do your senses reel?
Not unlikely! What rolls under?
Yawning death in yon abyss
Where the waters whirl and hiss
Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither . . .
But be sage! No watery grave
Needs await you: seeming brave
Kneel on safe, dear timid slave!
You surmised, when you climbed hither,
Just as easy were retreat
Should you tire, conceive unmeet
Longer patience at my feet?

Me as standing, you as stooping,—
Who arranged for each the pose?
Lest men think us friends turned foes,
Keep the attitude you chose!
Men are used to this same grouping—
I and you like statues seen.
You and I, no third between,
Kneel and stand! That makes the scene.

Mar it—and one buffet . . . Pardon!
Needless warmth—wise words in waste!
'T was prostration that replaced
Kneeling, then? A proof of taste.
Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on
Prostrate love—become no waif,
No estray to waves that chafe
Disappointed—love 's so safe!

Waves that chafe? The idlest fancy!
Peaks that scare? I think we know
Walls enclose our sculpture: so
Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau.
Up now! Wherefore hesitancy?
Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,
Laugh with me at waves and peak!
Silent still? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion,
Primatice speaks plainly! Pooh—
Rather, Florentine Le Roux!
I 've lost head for who is who—
So it swims and wanders! Fie on
What still proves me female! Here,
By the staircase!—for we near
That dark "Gallery of the Deer."

Look me in the eyes once! Steady!
Are you faithful now as erst
On that eve when we two first
Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed
Faith and falsehood? Pale already?
Forward! Must my hand compel
Entrance—this way? Exit—well,
Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell?

What if to the self-same place in
Rustic Avon, at the door
Of the village church once more,
Where a tombstone paves the floor
By that holy-water basin
You appealed to—"As, below,
This stone hides its corpse, e'en so
I your secrets hide"? What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess him!
I have judged the culprit there:
Execute my sentence! Care
For no mail such cowards wear!
Done, Priest? Then, absolve and bless him!
Now—you three, stab thick and fast,
Deep and deeper! Dead at last?
Thanks, friends—Father, thanks! Aghast?

What one word of his confession
Would you tell me, though I lured
With that royal crown abjured
Just because its bars immured
Love too much? Love burst compression,
Fled free, finally confessed
All its secrets to that breast
Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI.

Oh but is it not hard, Dear?
Mine are the nerves to quake at a mouse:
If a spider drops I shrink with fear:
I should die outright in a haunted house;
While for you—did the danger dared bring help—
From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,
With a serpent round me, stand stock-still,
Go sleep in a churchyard,—so would will
Give me the power to dare and do
Valiantly—just for you!

Much amiss in the head, Dear,
I toil at a language, tax my brain
Attempting to draw—the scratches here!
I play, play, practise and all in vain:
But for you—if my triumph brought you pride,
I would grapple with Greek Plays till I died,

Paint a portrait of you—who can tell?
Work my fingers off for your "Pretty well:"
Language and painting and music too,
Easily done—for you!

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,
With—more than a will—what seems a power
To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here
In flame devouring and to devour.
Such love has laboured its best and worst
To win me a lover; yet, last as first,
I have not quickened his pulse one beat,
Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet:
Yet the strong fierce heart's love's labour's due,
Utterly lost, was—you!

ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE.

One day it thundered and lightened.
Two women, fairly frightened,
Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,
At the feet of the man who sat betwixt;
And "Mercy!" cried each—"if I tell the truth
Of a passage in my youth!"

Said This: "Do you mind the morning
I met your love with scorning?
As the worst of the venom left my lips,
I thought 'If, despite this lie, he strips
The mask from my soul with a kiss—I crawl
His slave,—soul, body and all!'"

Said That: "We stood to be married;
The priest, or someone, tarried;
'If Paradise-door prove locked?' smiled you.
I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,
'Did one, that 's away, arrive—nor late
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!'

It ceased to lighten and thunder.
Up started both in wonder,
Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,
Then laughed "Confess you believed us, Dear!"
"I saw through the joke!" the man replied
They re-seated themselves beside.

IXION.

HIGH in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad triumph, behold us!
Here the revenge of a God, there the amends of a Man.
Whirling forever in torment, flesh once mortal, immortal
Made—for a purpose of hate—able to die and revive.
Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly for payment replenished,
Doles out—old yet young—agonies ever afresh;
Whence the result above me: torment is bridged by a rainbow,—
Tears, sweat, blood,—each spasm, ghastly once, glorified now.
Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained my place of reposing,
Off in a sparklike spray,—flesh become vapour thro' pain,—

rlies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's vaunted bodily vesture,
Made that his feats observed gain the approval of Man,—
Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the earth and the sky and the ocean.
Framed should pierce to the star, fitted to pore on the plant,—
All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-fashioned, re-fitted
Till, consummate at length,—lo, the employment of sense!
Pain 's mere minister now to the soul, once pledged to her pleasure—
Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unapprehensive of pain!
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving beguiled and betrayed her,
Made things false seem true, cheated thro' eye and thro' ear,
Lured thus heart and brain to believe in the lying reported,—
Spurn but the traitorous slave, uttermost atom, away,
What should obstruct soul's rush on the real, the only apparent?

Say I have erred,—how else? Was I Ixion or Zeus?
Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubtless awaken in wonder:
This proves shine, that—shade? Good was the evil that seemed?
Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture be taught I was blind once?
Sisuphos, teaches thy stone—Tantalos, teaches thy thirst
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure, less plainly demonstrates?
No, for the past was dream: now that the dreamers awake,
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos treason is folly.
Ask of myself, whose form melts on the murderous wheel,
What is the sin which throe and throe prove sin to the sinner!
Say the false charge was true,—thus do I expiate, say,
Arrogant thought, word, deed,—mere man who conceited me godlike,
Sat beside Zeus, my friend—knelt before Heré, my love!

What were the need but of pitying power to touch and disperse it,
Film-work—eye's and ear's—all the distraction of sense?
How should the soul not see, not hear,—perceive and as plainly
Render, in thought, word, deed, back again truth—not a lie?
"Ay, but the pain is to punish thee!" Zeus, once more for a pastime,
Play the familiar, the frank! Speak and have speech in return!
I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people obeyed me:
Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or die:
Wherefore? Because of the good to the people, because of the honour
Thence accruing to me, king, the king's law was supreme.
What of the weakling, the ignorant criminal? Not who, excuseless,
Breaking my law braved death, knowing his deed and its due—
Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor transgressor, of purpose
No whit more than a tree, born to erectness of bole,

Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty, columnar—
Loathe if athwart, askew,—leave to the axe and the flame!
Where is the vision may penetrate earth and beholding acknowledge
Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness of stem?
Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling, accounts for the failure,
—Here blew wind, so it bent: there the snow lodged, so it broke?
Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill, mere bite of the insect
Gnawed, gnarled, warped their worst: passive it lay to offence.
King—I was man, no more: what I recognized fau'ty I punished,
Laying it prone: be sure, more than a man had I proved,
Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birthtime had saved it, nor simply
Owned the distortion's excuse,—hindered it wholly: nay, more—
Even a man, as I sat in my place to do judgment, and pallid
Criminals passing to doom shuddered away at my foot,

Could I have probed thro' the face to the heart, read plain a repentance,
Crime confessed fools' play, virtue ascribed to the wise,
Had I not stayed the consignment to doom, not dealt the renewed ones
Life to retraverse the past, light to retrieve the misdeed?
Thus had I done, and thus to have done much more it behoves thee,
Zeus who madest man—flawless or faulty, thy work!
What if the charge were true, as thou mouthest,—Ixion the cherished
Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the godships and fell,
Forfeit thro' arrogance? Stranger! I clothed, with the grace of our human,
Inhumanity—gods, natures I likened to ours.
Man among men I had borne me till gods forsooth must regard me
—Nay, must approve, applaud, claim as a comrade at last.
Summoned to enter their circle, I sat—their equal, how other?
Love should be absolute love, faith is in fulness or nought.

"I am thy friend, be mine!" smiled Zeus: "If Heré attract thee,"
Blushed the imperial cheek, "then—as thy heart may suggest!"
Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love hailed love as its fellow,
"Zeus, we are friends—how fast! Heré, my heart for thy heart!"
Then broke smile into fury of frown, and the thunder of "Hence, fool!"
Then thro' the kiss laughed scorn "Limbs or a cloud was to clasp?"
Then from Olumpos to Erebos, then from the rapture to torment,
Then from the fellow of gods—misery's mate, to the man!
—Man henceforth and forever, who lent from the glow of his nature
Warmth to the cold, with light coloured the black and the blank.
So did a man conceive of your passion, you passion-protesters!
So did he trust, so love—being the truth of your lie!
You to aspire to be Man! Man made you who vainly would ape him:
You are the hollowness, he—filling you, falsifies void.

Even as—witness the emblem, Hell's sad triumph suspended,
Born of my tears, sweat, blood—bursting to vapour above—
Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike startles the darkness,
Cold white — jewelry quenched — justifies, glorifies pain.
Strive, mankind, though strife endure through endless obstruction,
Stage after stage, each rise marred by as certain a fall!
Baffled forever—yet never so baffled but, e'en in the baffling,
When Man's strength proves weak, checked in the body or soul—
Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence,—Ixion 's
Made for a purpose of hate,— clothing the entity Thou,
—Medium whence that entity strives for the Not-Thou beyond it,
Fire elemental, free, frame unencumbered, the All,—
Never so baffled but—when, on the verge of an alien existence,
Heartened to press, by pangs burst to the infinite Pure,
Nothing is reached but the ancient weakness still that arrests strength,

Circumambient still, still the poor human array,
Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty—all it has burst through,
Thought to escape,—fresh formed, found in the fashion it fled,—
Never so baffled but—when Man pays the price of endeavour,
Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-doomed to the wheel,—
Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat and blood of his torment,
E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let him look and rejoice!
What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns to a rapture
Pain—and despair's murk mists blends in a rainbow of hope?
What is beyond the obstruction, stage by stage tho' it baffle?
Back must I fall, confess "Ever the weakness I fled"?
No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-unobstructed!
Zeus was Zeus—not Man: wrecked by his weakness, I whirl.
Out of the wreck I rise—past Zeus to the Potency o'er him!

I—to have hailed him my friend! I—to have clasped
her—my love!
Pallid birth of my pain,—where light, where light is, aspiring
Thither I rise, whilst thou—Zeus, keep the godship and sink!

JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH.

"This now, this other story makes amends
And justifies our Mishna," quoth the Jew
Aforesaid. "Tell it, learnedest of friends!"

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue
O'er Schiphaz city, bringing joy and mirth,
—So had ye deemed; while the reverse was true,

Since one small house there gave a sorrow birth
In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,
Midnight, not morning settled on the earth.

How else, when it grew certain thou wouldst die
Our much-enlightened master, Israel's prop,
Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai?

Old, yea but, undiminished of a drop,
The vital essence pulsed through heart and brain;
Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop

On poll and chin and cheek, whereof a skein
Handmaids might weave—hairs silk-soft, silver-white,
Such as the wool-plant's; none the less in vain

Had Physic striven her best against the spite
Of fell disease: the Rabbi must succumb;
And, round the couch whereon in piteous plight

He lay a-dying, scholars,—awe-struck, dumb
Throughout the night-watch,—roused themselves and spoke
One to the other: "Ere death's touch benumb

"His active sense,—while yet 'neath Reason's yoke
Obedient toils his tongue,—befits we claim
The fruit of long experience, bid this oak

"Shed us an acorn which may, all the same,
Grow to a temple-pillar,—dear that day!—
When Israel's scattered seed finds place and name

"Among the envious nations. Lamp us, pray,
Thou the Enlightener! Partest hence in peace?
Hailest without regret—much less, dismay—

"The hour of thine approximate release
From fleshly bondage soul hath found obstruct?
Calmly envisagest the sure increase

"Of knowledge? Eden's tree must hold unplucked
Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not sucked?

"Say, does age acquiesce in vanished youth?
Still towers thy purity above—as erst—
Our pleasant follies? Be thy last word—truth!"

The Rabbi groaned; then, grimly, "Last as first
The truth speak I—in boyhood who began
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced

"For such presumption, die now hardly man.
What have I proved of life? To live, indeed,
That much I learned: but here lies Jochanan

"More luckless than stood David when, to speed
His fighting with the Philistine, they brought
Saul's harness forth: whereat, 'Alack, I need

"'Armour to arm me, but have never fought
With sword and spear, nor tried to manage shield,
Proving arms' use, as well-trained warrior ought.

"'Only a sling and pebbles can I wield!'
So he: while I, contrariwise, 'No trick
Of weapon helpful on the battle-field

"'Comes unfamiliar to my theoric:
But, bid me put in practice what I know,
Give me a sword—it stings like Moses' stick,

"'A serpent I let drop apace.' E'en so,
I,—able to comport me at each stage
Of human life as never here below

"Man played his part,—since mine the heritage
Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch,
Ye rightly praise,—I, therefore, who, thus sage,

"Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich
Life's annals with example how I played
Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist,—(all of which

"Parts in presentment failing, cries invade
The world's ear—'Ah, the Past, the pearl-gift thrown
To hogs, time's opportunity we made

"'So light of, only recognized when flown!
Had we been wise!')—in fine, I—wise enough,—
What profit brings me wisdom never shown

"Just when its showing would from each rebuff
Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to bounds
Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track too rough

"For youth's unsteady footstep, climb the rounds
Of life's long ladder, one by slippery one,
Yet make no stumble? Me hard fate confounds

"With that same crowd of wailers I outrun
By promising to teach another cry
Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the sun

"I look my last at is insulted by.
What cry,—ye ask? Give ear on every side!
Witness yon Lover! 'How entrapped am I!

"'Methought, because a virgin's rose-lip vied
With ripe Khubbezleh's, needs must beauty mate
With meekness and discretion in a bride:

"'Bride she became to me who wail—too late—
Unwise I loved!' That 's one cry. 'Mind 's my gift:
I might have loaded me with lore, full weight

"'Pressed down and running over at each rift
O' the brain-bag where the famished clung and fed.
I filled it with what rubbish!—would not sift

"'The wheat from chaff, sound grain from musty—shed
Poison abroad as oft as nutriment—
And sighing say but as my fellows said,

"'*Unwise I learned!*' That 's two. 'In dwarf s-play spent
Was giant's prowess: warrior all unversed
In war's right waging, I struck brand, was lent

"'For steel's fit service, on mere stone—and cursed
Alike the shocked limb and the shivered steel,
Seeing too late the blade's true use which erst

"'How was I blind to! My cry swells the peal—
Unwise I fought!' That 's three. But wherefore
waste
Breath on the wailings longer? Why reveal

"A root of bitterness whereof the taste
Is noisome to Humanity at large?
First we get Power, but Power absurdly placed

"In Folly's keeping, who resigns her charge
To Wisdom when all Power grows nothing worth:
Bones marrowless are mocked with helm and targe

"When, like your Master's, soon below the earth
With worms shall warfare only be. Farewell,
Children! I die a failure since my birth!"

"Not so!" arose a protest as, pell-mell,
They pattered from his chamber to the street,
Bent on a last resource. Our Targums tell

That such resource there is. Put case, there meet
The Nine Points of Perfection—rarest chance—
Within some saintly teacher whom the fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,
O'ertake before fit teaching born of these
Have magnified his scholars' countenance,—

If haply folk compassionating please
To render up—according to his store,
Each one—a portion of the life he sees

Hardly worth saving when 't is set before
Earth's benefit should the Saint, Hakkadosh,
Favoured thereby, attain to full fourscore—

If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy "Bosh!")
A year, a month, a day, an hour—to eke
Life out,—in him away the gift shall wash

That much of ill-spent time recorded, streak
The twilight of the so-assisted sage
With a new sunrise: truth, though strange to speak!

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth and age,
All Israel, thronging, waited for the last
News of the loved one. "'T is the final stage:

"Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread fast
The way of all flesh!" So announced that apt
Olive-branch Tsaddik: "Yet, O Brethren, cast

"No eye to earthward! Look where heaven has clapped
Morning's extinguisher—yon ray-shot robe
Of sun-threads—on the constellation mapped

"And mentioned by our Elders,—yea, from Job
Down to Satam,—as figuring forth—what?
Perpend a mystery! Ye call it *Dob*—

"'The Bear': I trow, a wiser name than that
Were *Aish*—'The Bier': a corpse those four stars hold,
Which—are not those Three Daughters weeping at,

"*Banoth*? I judge so: list while I unfold
The reason. As in twice twelve hours this Bier
Goes and returns, about the East-cone rolled,

"So may a setting luminary here
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew
Upon its track of labour, strong and clear,

"About the Pole—that Salem, every Jew
Helps to build up when thus he saves some Saint
Ordained its architect. Ye grasp the clue

"To all ye seek? The Rabbi's lamp-flame faint
Sinks: would ye raise it? Lend then life from yours,
Spare each his oil-drop! Do I need acquaint

"The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures
Ten-fold requital?—urge ye emulate
The fame of those Old Just Ones death procures

"Such praise for, that 't is now men's sole debate
Which of the Ten, who volunteered at Rome
To die for glory to our Race, was great

"Beyond his fellows? Was it thou—the comb
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,
While thy lips sputtered thro' their bloody foam

"Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba!)
'Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One'? Or thou,
Jischab?—who smiledst, burning, since there lay,

"Burning along with thee, our Law! I trow,
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford:
While that for which I make petition now,

"To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt thou hoard
Each minute of long years thou look'st to spend
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou so soared,

"Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend
And teacher, warbling like a woodland bird,
There 's left no Selah, 'twixt two psalms, to lend

"Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou, averred
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag
Once more on Zion's mount,—doth, all-unheard,

"My pleading fail to move thee? Toss some rag
Shall staunch our wound, some minute never missed
From swordsman's lustihood like thine! Wilt lag

"In liberal bestowment, show close fist
When open palm we look for,—thou, wide-known
For statecraft? whom, 't is said, an if thou list,

"The Shah himself would seat beside his throne,
So valued were advice from thee" . . . But here
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not alone

From those addressed, but, far as well as near,
The crowd broke into clamour: "Mine, mine, mine—
Lop from my life the excrescence, never fear!

"At me thou lookedst, markedst me! Assign
To me that privilege of granting life—
Mine, mine!" Then he: "Be patient! I combine

"The needful portions only, wage no strife
With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out
The Rabbi's day unduly. 'T is the knife

"I stop,—would cut its thread too short. About
As much as helps life last the proper term,
The appointed Fourscore,—that I crave and scout

"A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm
Change at fit season to the butterfly!
And here a story strikes me, to confirm

"This judgment. Of our worthies, none ranks high
As Perida who kept the famous school:
None rivalled him in patience: none! For why?

"In lecturing it was his constant rule,
Whatever he expounded, to repeat
—Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some fool

"Should fail to understand him fully—(feat
Unparalleled, Uzzean!)—do ye mark?—
Five hundred times! So might he entrance beat

"For knowledge into howsoever dark
And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed, at close
Of one especial lecture, not one spark

"Of light was found to have illumed the rows
Of pupils round their pedagogue. 'What, still
Impenetrable to me? Then—here goes!'

"And for a second time he sets the rill
Of knowledge running, and five hundred times
More re-repeats the matter—and gains *nil*.

"Out broke a voice from heaven: 'Thy patience climbs
Even thus high. Choose! Wilt thou, rather, quick
Ascend to bliss—or, since thy zeal sublimes

"'Such drudgery, will thy back still bear its crick,
Bent o'er thy class,—thy voice drone spite of drouth,—
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt stick?'

"'To heaven with me!' was in the good man's mouth,
When all his scholars,—cruel-kind were they!—
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North and South,

"Rending the welkin with their shout of 'Nay—
No heaven as yet for our instructor! Grant
Five hundred years on earth for Perida!'

"And so long did he keep instructing! Want
Our Master no such misery! I but take
Three months of life marital. Ministrant

"Be thou of so much, Poet! Bold I make,
Swordsman, with thy frank offer!—and conclude,
Statist, with thine! One year,—ye will not shake

"My purpose to accept no more. So rude?
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must press
And proffer their addition? Thanks! The mood

"Is laudable, but I reject, no less,
One month, week, day of life more. Leave my gown,
Ye overbold ones! Your life's gift, you guess,

"Were good as any? Rudesby, get thee down!
Set my feet free, or fear my staff! Farewell,
Seniors and saviours, sharers of renown

"With Jochanan henceforward!" Straightway fell
Sleep on the sufferer; who awoke in health,
Hale everyway, so potent was the spell.

O the rare Spring-time! Who is he by stealth
Approaches Jochanan?—embowered that sits
Under his vine and figtree mid the wealth

Of garden-sights and sounds, since intermits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints
The rose her smell. In homage that befits

The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, imprints
A kiss on the extended foot, low bends
Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious, hints

"What if it should be time? A period ends—
That of the Lover's gift—his quarter-year
Of lustihood: 't is just thou make amends,

"Return that loan with usury: so, here
Come I, of thy Disciples delegate,
Claiming our lesson from thee. Make appear

"Thy profit from experience! Plainly state
How men should Love!" Thus he: and to him thus
The Rabbi: "Love, ye call it?—rather, Hate!

"What wouldst thou? Is it needful I discuss
Wherefore new sweet wine, poured in bottles caked
With old strong wine's deposit, offers us

"Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-unslaked?
Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there wound
Languors and yearnings: not a sense but ached!

"Weighed on by fancied form and feature, sound
Of silver word and sight of sunny smile:
No beckoning of a flower-branch, no profound

"Purple of noon-oppression, no light wile
O' the West wind, but transformed itself till—brief—
Before me stood the phantasy ye style

"Youth's love, the joy that shall not come to grief,
Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired
By custom the accloyer, time the thief.

"Had Age's hard cold knowledge only spared
That ignorance of Youth! But now the dream,
Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared

"As fares the pigeon, finding what may seem
Her nest's safe hollow holds a snake inside
Coiled to enclasp her. See, Eve stands supreme

"In youth and beauty! Take her for thy bride!
What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out was dew
Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon quick dried

"While Youth bent gazing at its red and blue
Supposed perennial,—never dreamed the sun
Which kindled the display would quench it too.

"Graces of shape and colour—everyone
With its appointed period of decay
When ripe to purpose! 'Still, these dead and done,

"'Survives the woman-nature—the soft sway
Of undefinable omnipotence
O'er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam's clay.'

"Ay, if my physics taught not why and whence
The attraction! Am I like the simple steer
Who, from his pasture lured inside the fence

"Where yoke and goad await him, holds that mere
Kindliness prompts extension of the hand
Hollowed for barley, which drew near and near

"His nose—in proof that, of the horned band,
The farmer best affected him? Beside,
Steer, since his calfhood, got to understand

"Farmers a many in the world so wide
Were ready with a handful just as choice
Or choicer—maize and cummin, treats untried.

"Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice
I gained the peacock? 'Las me, round I look,
And lo—'With me thou wouldst have blamed no voice

"'Like hers that daily deafens like a rook:
I am the phœnix!'—'I, the lark, the dove,
—The owl,' for aught knows he who blindly took

"Peacock for partner, while the vale, the grove,
The plain held bird-mates in abundance. There!
Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found out Love

"Long ago. War seems better worth man's care.
But leave me! Disappointment finds a balm
Haply in slumber." "This first step o' the stair

"To knowledge fails me, but the victor's palm
Lies on the next to tempt him overleap
A stumbling-block. Experienced, gather calm,

"Thou excellence of Judah, cured by sleep
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace
The Lover! At due season I shall reap

"Fruit of my planting!" So, with lengthened face,
Departed Tsaddik: and three moons more waxed
And waned, and not until the Summer-space

Waned likewise, any second visit taxed
The Rabbi's patience. But at three months' end,
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed

The sage lay musing till the noon should spend
Its ardour. Up comes Tsaddik, who but he,
With "Master, may I warn thee, nor offend,

"That time comes round again? We look to see
Sprout from the old branch—not the youngling twig—
But fruit of sycamine: deliver me,

"To share among my fellows, some plump fig,
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,
Who, with a scantling of his store, made big

"Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,
To share his gains by long acquaintanceship
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are

"Of battle dowry,—he bids loose thy lip,
Explain the good of battle! Since thou know'st
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,

"More need that we improve them!"—"Ay, we boast,
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword
Man goes the swiftliest to the uttermost—

Takes the straight way thro' lands yet unexplored
To absolute Right and Good,—may so obtain
God's glory and man's weal too long ignored,

"Too late attained by preachments all in vain—
The passive process. Knots get tangled worse
By toying with: does cut cord close again?

"Moreover there is blessing in the curse
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse

"Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves
The riddle—*Wherein differs Man from beast?*
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves:

"Nowhere but in mankind is found the least
Touch of an impulse 'To our fellows—good
I' the highest!—not diminished but increased

"'By the condition plainly understood
—Such good shall be attained at price of hurt
I' the highest to ourselves!' Fine sparks, that brood

"Confusedly in Man, 't is war bids spurt
Forth into flame: as fares the meteor-mass,
Whereof no particle but holds inert

"Some seed of light and heat, however crass
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge
Its radiant birth before there come to pass

"Some push external,—strong to set at large
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice
Through heaven and light up earth from marge to
marge:

"Since force by motion makes—what erst was ice—
Crash into fervency and so expire,
Because some Djinn has hit on a device

"For proving the full prettiness of fire!
Ay, thus we prattle—young: but old—why, first,
Where 's that same Right and Good—(the wise
inquire)—

"So absolute, it warrants the outburst
Of blood, tears, all war's woeful consequence,
That comes of the fine flaring? Which plague cursed

"The more your benefited Man—offence,
Or what suppressed the offender? Say it did—
Show us the evil cured by violence,

"Submission cures not also! Lift the lid
From the maturing crucible, we find
Its slow sure coaxing-out of virtue hid

"In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined
Those particles and, yielding for result
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves behind

"The heroic product. E'en the simple cult
Of Edom's children wisely bids them turn
Cheek to the smiter with '*Sic Jesus vult.*'

"Say there 's a tyrant by whose death we earn
Freedom, and justify a war to wage:
Good!—were we only able to discern

"Exactly how to reach and catch and cage
Him only and no innocent beside!
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its rage

"—How shared they his ill-doing? Far and wide
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but died

"In faith that vassals owed their suzerain
Life: therefore each paid tribute,—honest soul,—
To that same Right and Good ourselves are fain

"To call exclusively our end. From bole
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)
Pluck, eat, digest a fable—yea, the sole

"Fig I afford you! 'Dost thou dwarf my vine?'
(So did a certain husbandman address
The tree which faced his field), 'Receive condign

"'Punishment, prompt removal by the stress
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root!'
Long did he hack and hew, the root no less

"As long defied him, for its tough strings shoot
As deep down as the boughs above aspire:
All that he did was—shake to the tree's foot

"Leafage and fruitage, things we most require
For shadow and refreshment: which good deed
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires

"His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes a frost,
One natural night's work, and there 's little need

"Of hacking, hewing: lo, the tree 's a ghost!
Perished it starves, black death from topmost bough
To farthest-reaching fibre! Shall I boast

"My rough work,—warfare,—helped more? Loving, now—
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since
The loving fool was able to avow

"He could effect his purpose, just evince
Love's willingness,—once 'ware of what she lacked,
His loved one,—to go work for that, nor wince

"At self-expenditure: he neither hacked
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field
Required defence because the sun attacked,

"He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to wield

"The intellectual weapon—poet-lays,—
How preferably had I sung one song
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me: go your ways!

"I sleep out disappointment." "Come along,
Never lose heart! There 's still as much again
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong

"Done by its earlier moiety—explain
Wherefore, who may! The Poet's mood comes next.
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

"Should pulse within him? Jochanan, thou reck'st
Little of what a generous flood shall soon
Float thy clogged spirit free and unperplexed

"Above dry dubitation! Song 's the boon
Shall make amends for my untoward mistake
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun and moon—

"Fighter and Lover,—which for most men make
All they descry in heaven,—stand both stock-still
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou wake!"

Autumn brings Tsaddik. "Ay, there speeds the rill
Loaded with leaves: a scowling sky, beside:
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill

"Whiten and shudder—symptoms far and wide
Of gleaning-time's approach; and glean good store
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

"And ripe experimenter! Three months more
Have ministered to growth of Song: that graft
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

"Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap
Of prose-experience which provides the draught

"Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither: vain we tap
A youngling stem all green and immature:
Experience must secret the stuff, our hap

"Will be to quench Man's thirst with, glad and sure
That fancy wells up through corrective fact:
Missing which test of truth, though flowers allure

"The goodman's eye with promise, soon the pact
Is broken, and 't is flowers,—mere words,—he finds
When things,—that 's fruit,—he looked for. Well, once
cracked

"The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel grinds!
Song may henceforth boast substance! Therefore, hail
Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds!

"Thou from whose eye hath dropped the envious scale
Which hides the truth of things and substitutes
Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

"To transpierce,—hast entrusted to the lute's
Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

"As only knowledge can?" "A fount unsealed"
(Sighed Jochanan) "should seek the heaven in leaps
To die in dew-gems—not find death, congealed

"By contact with the cavern's nether deeps,
Earth's secretest foundation where, enswathed
In dark and fear, primæval mystery sleeps—

"Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed
And straight turned ice. My dreams of good and fair
In soaring upwards had dissolved, unscathed

"By any influence of the kindly air,
Singing, as each took flight, The Future—that 's
Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

"Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats
O' the Present! Day 's the song-time for the lark,
Night for her music boasts but owls and bats.

"And what 's the Past but night—the deep and dark
Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thicked with its drowned
Dead fancies which no sooner touched the mark

"They aimed at—fact—than all at once they found
Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit to reach
And roll in æther, revel—robed and crowned

"As truths, confirmed by falsehood all and each—
Sovereign and absolute and ultimate!
Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age impeach

"Thy least of promises to re-instate
Adam in Eden! Sing on, ever sing,
Chirp till thou burst!—the fool cicada's fate,

"Who holds that after Summer next comes Spring,
Than Summer's self sun-warmed, spice-scented more.
Fighting was better! There, no fancy-fling

"Pitches you past the point was reached of yore
By Sampsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,
The mighty men of valour who, before

"Our little day, did wonders none profess
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.

"Were I a Statesman, now! Why, that were just
To pinnacle my soul, mankind above,
A-top the universe: no vulgar lust

"To gratify—fame, greed, at this remove
Looked down upon so far—or overlooked
So largely, rather—that mine eye should rove

"World-wide and rummage earth, the many-nooked,
Yet find no unit of the human flock
Caught straying but straight comes back hooked and
crooked

"By the strong shepherd who, from out his stock
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock

"There, baldness or excrescence,—that, with grease,
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a peace

"Steals o'er the Statist,—while, in wit, a match
For shrewd Ahithophel, in wisdom . . . well,
His name escapes me—somebody, at watch

"And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel
In guidance of the Chosen!"—at which word
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.

"Cold weather!" shivered Tsaddik. "Yet the hoard
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,
Ever abundant most when fields afford

"Least pasture, and alike disgrace the plain
Tall tree and lowly shrub. 'T is so with us
Mortals: our age stores wealth ye seek in vain

"While busy youth culls just what we discuss
At leisure in the last days: and the last
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus

"I make one more appeal to! Thine amassed
Experience, now or never, let escape
Some portion of! For I perceive aghast

"The end approaches, while they jeer and jape,
These sons of Shimei: 'Justify your boast!
What have ye gained from Death by twelve months'
rape?'

"Statesman, what cure hast thou for—least and
most—
Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly dosed,

"Forget disparity, bid each go gay
That, with his bauble,—with his burden, this?
Propose an alkahest shall melt away

"Men's lacquer, show by prompt analysis
Which is the metal, which the make-believe,
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss

"Coinage and currency? Make haste, retrieve
The precious moments, Master!" Whereunto
There snarls an "Ever laughing in thy sleeve.

"Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain a clue
To guide man where life's wood is intricate:
How shall he fail to thrid its thickest through

"When every oak-trunk takes the eye? Elate
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging finds—
Smothered in briars—that the small 's the great!

"All men are men: I would all minds were minds!
Whereas 't is just the many's mindless mass
That most needs helping: labourers and hinds

"We legislate for—not the cultured class
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the whip
And bridle,—proper help for mule and ass,

"Did the brutes know! In vain our statesmanship
Strives at contenting the rough multitude:
Still the ox cries 'T is me thou shouldst equip

" 'With equine trappings!' or, in humbler mood,
'Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work—
Adequate rumination o'er my food!'

" Better remain a Poet! Needs it irk
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere,
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and murk

" Round about Goshen? Though light disappear,
Shut inside,—temporary ignorance
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear

" Shows each astonished starer the expanse
Of heaven made bright with knowledge! That 's the
way,
The only way—I see it at a glance—

" To legislate for earth! As poet. . . . Stay!
What is . . . I would that . . . were it . . . I had
been . . .
O sudden change, as if my arid clay

" Burst into bloom! . . ." " A change indeed, I ween,
And change the last!" sighed Tsaddik as he kissed
The closing eyelids. " Just as those serene

"Princes of Night apprised me! Our acquist
Of life is spent, since corners only four
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made desist

"In passage round the Pole (O Mishna's lore—
Little it profits here!) by strenuous tug
Of friends who eked out thus to full fourscore

"The Rabbi's years. I see each shoulder shrug!
What have we gained? Away the Bier may roll!
To-morrow, when the Master's grave is dug,

"In with his body I may pitch the scroll
I hoped to glorify with, text and gloss,
My Science of Man's Life: one blank 's the whole!

"Love, war, song, statesmanship—no gain, all loss,
The stars' bestowment! We on our return
To-morrow merely find—not gold but dross,

"The body not the soul. Come, friends, we learn
At least thus much by our experiment—
That—that . . . well, find what, whom it may concern!"

But next day through the city rumours went
Of a new persecution; so, they fled
All Israel, each man,—this time,—from his tent,

Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the dread
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again
Some three months after, to the cave they sped

Where lay the Sage,—a reverential train!
Tsaddik first enters. "What is this I view?
The Rabbi still alive? No stars remain

"Of Aisch to stop within their courses. True,
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must urge
Their offerings on me: can it be—one threw

"Life at him and it stuck? There needs the scourge
To teach that urchin manners! Prithee, grant
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge

"Just to explain no friend was ministrant,
This time, of life to thee! Some jackanapes,
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant

"Scurvy unripe existence—wilding grapes
Grass-green and sorrel-sour—on that grand wit.
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes

"May fitly image forth this life of thine
Fed on the last low fattening lees—condensed
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine!

"Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now incensed
Had he been witting of the mischief wrought
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed!"

And slowly woke,—like Shushan's flower besought
By over-curious handling to unloose
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought

Her captive bee, mid store of sweets to choose,
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,
Sucking on, sated never,—whose, O whose

Might seem that countenance, uplift, all eased
Of old distraction and bewilderment,
Absurdly happy? "How ye have appeased

"The strife within me, bred this whole content,
This utter acquiescence in my past,
Present and future life,—by whom was lent

"The power to work this miracle at last,—
Exceeds my guess. Though—*ignorance confirmed*
By knowledge sounds like paradox, I cast

"Vainly about to tell you—fitlier termed—
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,
Each nullifying either! Henceforth wormed

"From out my heart is every snake that bites
The dove that else would brood there: doubt, which
kills
With hiss of 'What if sorrows end delights?'

"Fear which stings ease with 'Work the Master wills!
Experience which coils round and strangles quick
Each hope with 'Ask the Past if hoping skills

"'To work accomplishment, or proves a trick
Wiling thee to endeavour! Strive, fool, stop
Nowise, so live, so die—that 's law! why kick

"'Against the pricks?' All out-wormed! Slumber, drop
Thy films once more and veil the bliss within!
Experience strangle hope? Hope waves a-top

"Her wings triumphant! Come what will, I win,
Whoever loses! Every dream 's assured
Of soberest fulfilment. Where 's a sin

"Except in doubting that the light, which lured
The unwary into darkness, meant no wrong
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused immured

"By mists I should have pressed thro', passed along
My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the boy's
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,

"Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like, destroys,—
Not the man's slow conviction 'Vanity
Of vanities—alike my griefs and joys!'

"Ice!—thawed (look up) each bird, each insect by—
(Look round) by all the plants that break in bloom,
(Look down) by every dead friend's memory

"That smiles 'Am I the dust within my tomb?'
Not either, but both these—amalgam rare—
Mix in a product, not from Nature's womb,

"But stuff which He the Operant—who shall dare
Describe His operation?—strikes alive
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care

"How from this tohu-bohu—hopes which dive,
And fears which soar—faith, ruined through and through
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust—revive

"In some surprising sort,—as see, they do!
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends.
What does it mean unless—O strange and new

"Discovery!—this life proves a wine-press—blends
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,
Into a novel drink which—who intends

"To quaff, must bear a brain for ecstasies
Attempered, not this all-inadequate
Organ which, quivering within me, dies

"—Nay, lives!—what, how,—too soon, or else too
late—
I was—I am . . ." ("He babbleth!" Tsaddik mused)
"O Thou Almighty who canst re-instate

"Truths in their primal clarity, confused
By man's perception, which is man's and made
To suit his service,—how, once disabused

"Of reason which sees light half shine half shade,
Because of flesh, the medium that adjusts
Purity to his visuals, both an aid

"And hindrance,—how to eyes earth's air encrusts,
When purged and perfect to receive truth's beam
Pouring itself on the new sense it trusts

"With all its plenitude of power,—how seen
The intricacies now, of shade and shine,
Oppugnant natures—Right and Wrong, we deem

"Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,
Freed now of imperfection, ye avail
To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine

" Henceforth what, erst divided, caused you quail—
So huge the chasm between the false and true,
The dream and the reality! All hail,

" Day of my soul's deliverance—day the new,
The never-ending! What though every shape
Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue

" Even to success each semblance of escape
From my own bounded self to some all-fair
All-wise external fancy, proved a rape

" Like that old giant's, feigned of fools—on air,
Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To love—
That lesson was to learn not here—but there—

" On earth, not here! 'T is there we learn,—there prove
Our parts upon the stuff we needs must spoil,
Striving at mastery, there bend above

" The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year of toil
Attests the potter tried his hand upon,
Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil

"His hand cried 'So much for attempt—anon
Performance! Taught to mould the living vase,
What matter the cracked pitchers dead and gone?'

"Could I impart and could thy mind embrace
The secret, Tsaddik!" "Secret none to me!"
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. "The truth I see
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,
Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

"Wherein, though the last breath have passed the
throat,
So that 'The man is dead' we may pronounce,
Yet is the Ruach—(thus do we denote

"The imparted Spirit)—in no haste to bounce
From its entrusted Body,—some three days
Lingers ere it relinquish to the pounce

"Of hawk-clawed Death his victim. Further says
Halaphta, 'Instances have been, and yet
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly ways

"'Tend to perfection, very nearly get
To heaven while still on earth: and, as a fine
Interval shows where waters pure have met

"'Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet with brine,
That 's neither sea nor river but a taste
Of both—so meet the earthly and divine

"'And each is either.' Thus I hold him graced—
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,
Wholly in heaven, who knows? My mind embraced

"Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt?
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,
Keep of the leavings!" Thus was brought about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan:
Thou hast him,—sinner-saint, live-dead, boy-man,—
Schiphaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan!

NOTE,—This story can have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing, משך של רבים בדים, from which I might have helped myself more liberally. Thus, instead of the simple reference to "Moses' stick,' —but what if I make amends by attempting three illustrations, when some thirty might be composed on the same subject, equally justifying that pithy proverb ממשה עד משה לא קם כמשה.

I.

MOSES the Meek was thirty cubits high,
The staff he strode with—thirty cubits long:
And when he leapt, so muscular and strong
Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky
By thirty cubits more: we learn thereby
He reached full ninety cubits—am I wrong?—
When, in a fight slurred o'er by sacred song,
With staff outstretched he took a leap to try
The just dimensions of the giant Og.
And yet he barely touched—this marvel lacked
Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
Of marvels—barely touched—to be exact—
The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
That fain would match an ox in stature: fact!

II.

And this same fact has met with unbelief!
How saith a certain traveller? "Young, I chanced
To come upon an object—if thou canst,
Guess me its name and nature! 'T was, in brief,
White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,
—And this is what especially enhanced
My wonder—that it seemed, as I advanced,

Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
Of marvels, this—Posterity! I walked
From end to end,—four hours walked I, who go
A goodly pace,—and found—I have not baulked
Thine expectation, Stranger? Ay or No?
T was but Og's thigh-bone, all the while, I stalked
Alongside of: respect to Moses, though!"

III.

Og's thigh-bone—if ye deem its measure strange,
Myself can witness to much length of shank
Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
Once halting, I was minded to exchange
Noon heat for cool. Quoth I "On many a grange
I have seen storks perch—legs both long and lank:
Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,
Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!" "Do not so!"
Warned me a voice from heaven. "A man let drop
His axe into that shallow rivulet—
As thou accountest—seventy years ago:
It fell and fell and still without a stop
Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet.'

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE.

NEVER the time and the place
And the loved one all together!
This path—how soft to pace!
This May—what magic weather!
Where is the loved one's face?
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
Where, outside, rain and wind combine
With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
With a malice that marks each word, each sign!
O enemy sly and serpentine,
Uncoil thee from the waking man!
Do I hold the Past
Thus firm and fast
Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?

This path so soft to pace shall lead
Thro' the magic of May to herself indeed!
Or narrow if needs the house must be,
Outside are the storms and strangers: we—
Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
—I and she!

PAMBO.

SUPPOSE that we part (work done, comes play)
With a grave tale told in crambo
—As our hearty sires were wont to say—
Whereof the hero is Pambo?

Do you happen to know who Pambo was?
Nor I—but this much have heard of him:
He entered one day a college-class,
And asked—was it so absurd of him?—

"May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise it?
In wisdom I fain would ground me:
Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,
Some psalm to the purpose expound me!"

"That psalm," the Professor smiled, "shall be
Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth
Pellucid streams when an ass like thee
Would drink there—the Nine-and-thirtieth.

"Verse first: *I said I will look to my ways*
That I with my tongue offend not.
How now? Why stare? Art struck in amaze?
Stop, stay! The smooth line hath an end knot!

"He 's gone!—disgusted my text should prove
Too easy to need explaining?
Had he waited, the blockhead might find I move
To matter that pays remaining!"

Long years went by, when—"Ha, who 's this?
Do I come on the restive scholar
I had driven to Wisdom's goal, I wis,
But that he slipped the collar?

'What? Arms crossed, brow bent, thought-immersed?
A student indeed! Why scruple
To own that the lesson proposed him first
Scarce suited so apt a pupil?

"Come back! From the beggarly elements
To a more recondite issue
We pass till we reach, at all events,
Some point that may puzzle . . . Why 'pish' you?"

From the ground looked piteous up the head:
"Daily and nightly, Master,
Your pupil plods thro' that text you read,
Yet gets on never the faster.

"At the self-same stand,—now old, then young!
I will look to my ways—were doing
As easy as saying!—*that I with my tongue*
Offend not—and 'scape pooh-poohing

"From sage and simple, doctor and dunce?
Ah, nowise! Still doubts so muddy
The stream I would drink at once,—but once!
That—thus I resume my study!"

Brother, brother, I share the blame,
Arcades sumus ambo!
Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,
Lack not the critic's flambeau,
And *look to my ways*, yet, much the same,
Offend with my tongue—like Pambo!

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